£300 MUSIC MAN SUB VS. £7000 FODERA...WHO WINS? PLUS AMPEG, G&K, WOOD & TRONICS GEAR REVIEWED

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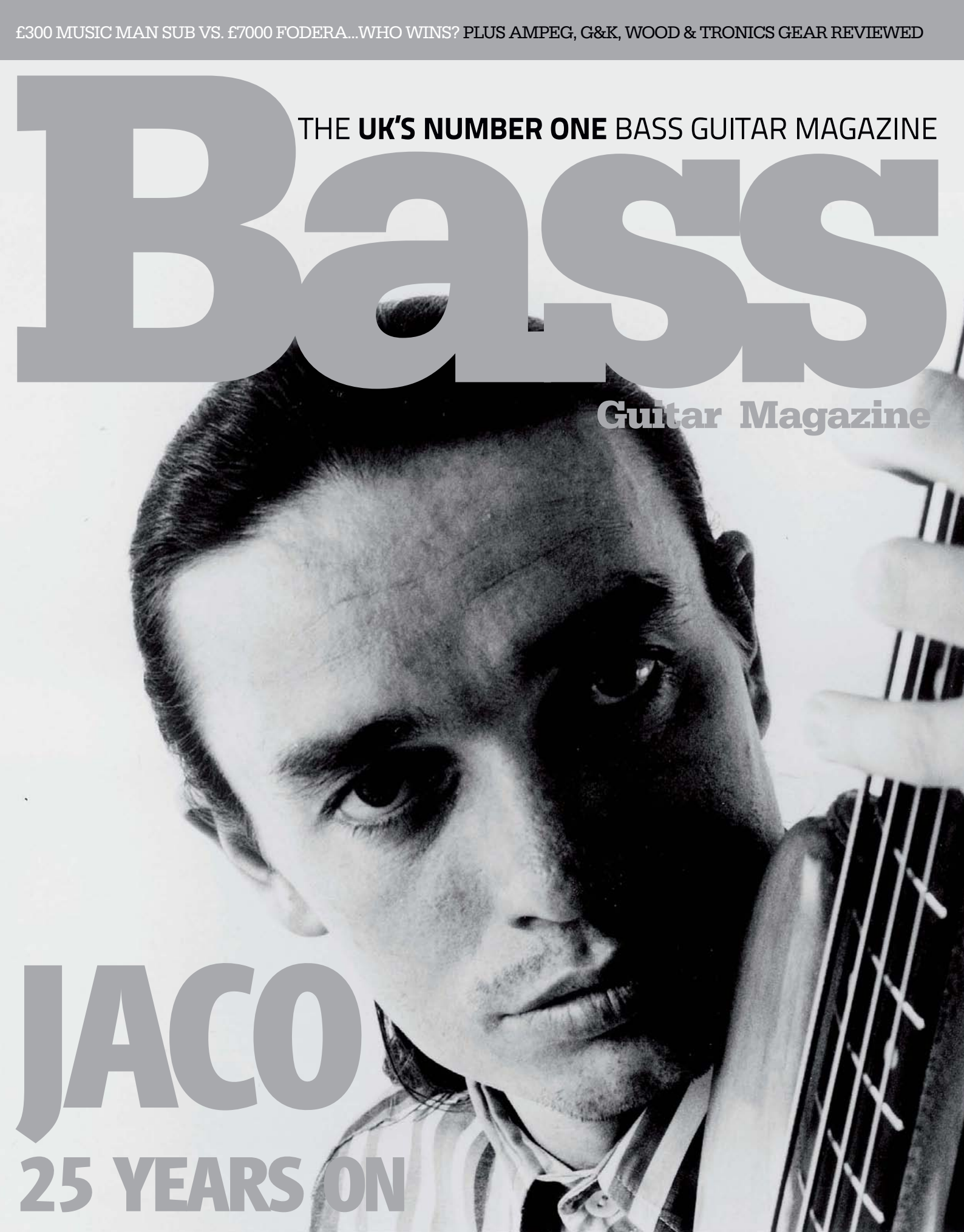
Bass

Guitar Magazine



JACO

25 YEARS ON

Rare Jaco interview | Mark King Remembers The Legend | Testament | Alexis Cuadrado | Horslips | Oliver McKiernan | Columns From Trivium, Therapy?, Acoustic Ladyland, Nik Kershaw Bassists... Plus 10-String Madness!

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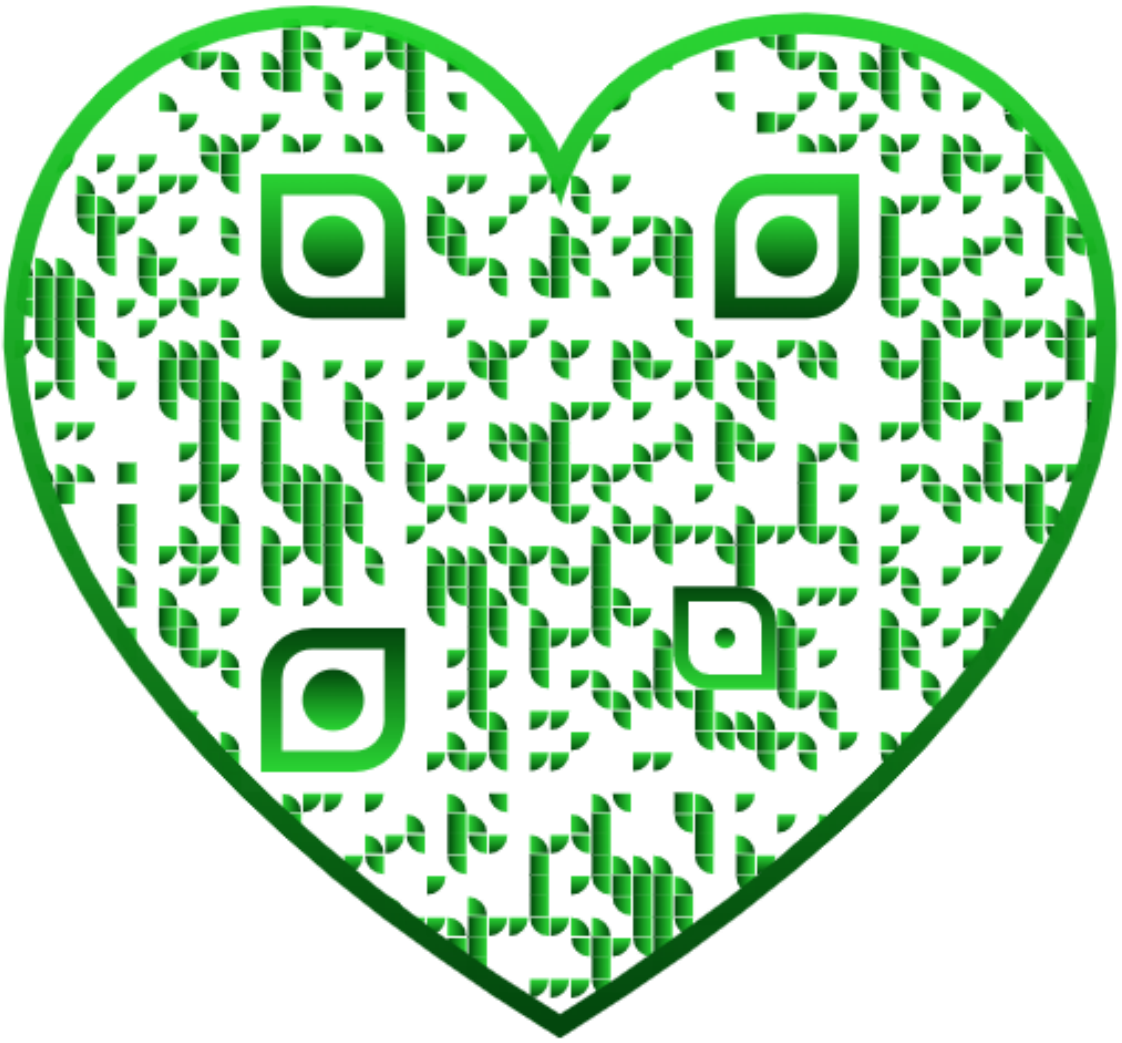

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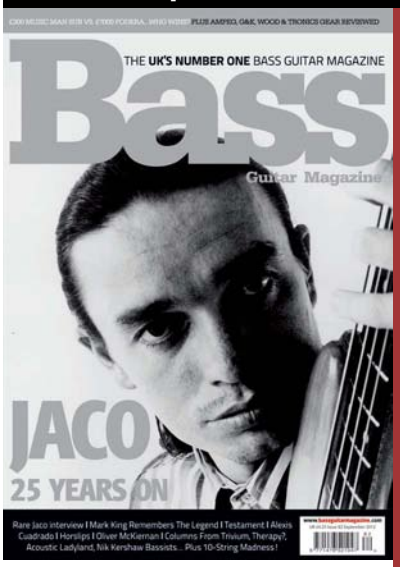

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Grace Note

OK, OK – I admit it. Here at the *Bass Guitar Magazine* command bunker, we're not perfect. We try our hardest every month to bring every bassist the ultimate source of information and education about life down at the low end, but we still need your feedback to hit gold every time. Luckily for us, several of you have written in lately with suggestions, requesting more reviews of low- to mid-budget basses and columns that cater to the novice – both of which make a lot of sense to us. In recent months we've been focused on a hell of a lot of high-spec, high-price gear, not because we're snobs or wealthy beyond our wildest dreams (come on, this isn't *Vogue* magazine!), but simply because there has been a ton of high-end product up for review in recent times. Without further ado, then, we unveil our lead review this month of a £300 Music Man plus a brand-new column for new bassists called Beginning Bass, helmed by teacher and session guru Jack Stevens. Expect more reviews of affordable gear in future, too. We're also debuting David Etheridge's new column for readers wishing to investigate the double bass. Come on, you know you want to…

So who was the greatest bass player ever? For millions, it was the late, ineffably great Jaco Pastorius, who has been jamming along in the sky since September 1987. In honour of this 25-year anniversary we've unearthed a rarely-seen interview with Jaco from 1977, courtesy of rock scribe Steven Rosen, while Level 42's Mark King – a huge Pastorius fan – also pays tribute. Elsewhere in this issue we've talked with rock and jazz bassists of all stripes, reviewed a whole raft of killer gear (from the aforementioned 300-quid beauty to a mighty seven-grand Fodera) and knuckled down to bring you the best advice and techniques columns from session legends and bona fide rock stars alike. It's a tough job, but we love it. And remember what I said: if you have suggestions for *BGM*, put them in writing to me via email or at our Facebook page (just search for 'bass guitar magazine'). See you next month!

Joel McIver, Editor

Gear

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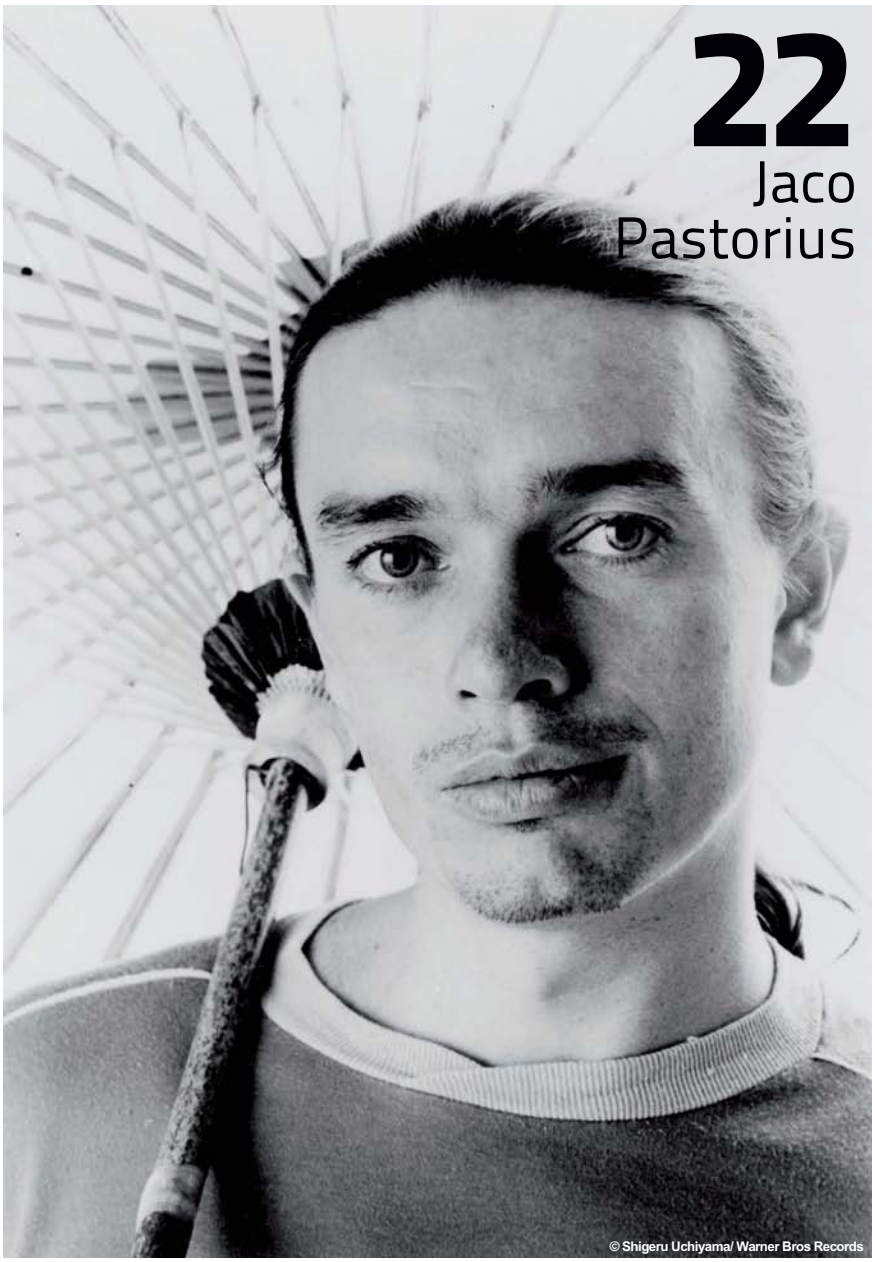

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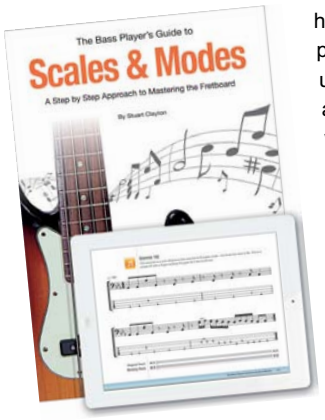
THE LOW DOWN

News and grooves from the bass dimension

A LA MODE

"We're delighted to announce the release of our first book developed for the iPad, The Bass Player's Guide to Scales & Modes," says *BGM* scribe Stuart Clayton. "This digital version of one of our most popular books features the audio files embedded on the same page as the relevant notation, and includes full versions of the tracks (with bass, for reference), and backing tracks without bass to play along with. The user experience with the new Apple books is extraordinary, and navigating through the different sections couldn't be simpler. This version of the book also includes an intro video and a full glossary section."

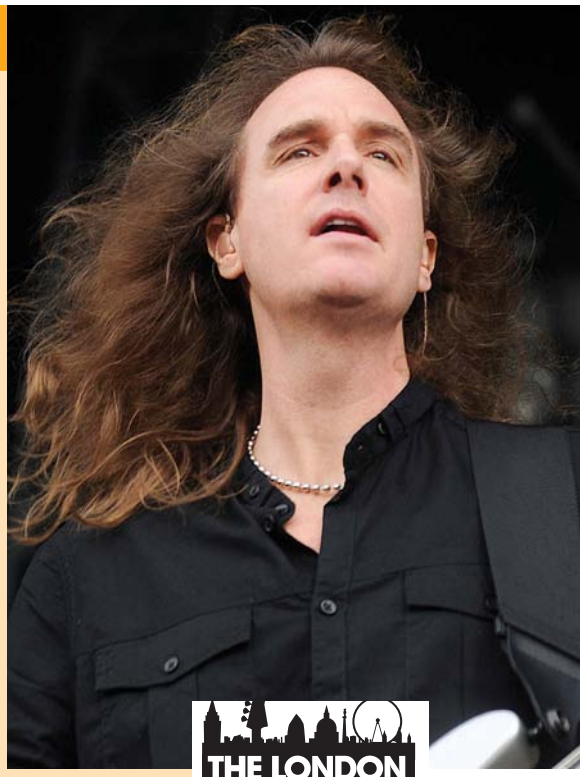


He adds: "I'm hoping that people enjoy using this book as much as we did putting it together: I think it's a great way to study these essential musical concepts. We will be releasing further iBooks later in the year. Ultimate Slap Bass will be split into three books: Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced, and the new Sight Reading book will be released for the iPad at the same time as the physical release, which is scheduled for late 2012."

Interested? Then raise a glass to our boy Stu, who has given us five iBooks to give away to the first five readers to email the editor the answer to this highly literary question:

Which mode can be also be found in the title of an Oscar Wilde novel?

MEGA BASS



We're absolutely delighted to reveal that the mighty David Ellefson of Megadeth will be appearing at the London Bass Guitar Show 2013. David is the first announcement on the roster for next year's event, to be held on the weekend 2-3 March, and hosted in association with *Bass Guitar Magazine*. He'll be delivering one of his acclaimed masterclasses on the Saturday, and if his recent bass clinics for Jackson Guitars and amplifier brand Hartke are anything to go by, you won't want to miss out.

As headbangers and bass enthusiasts worldwide know, David is a long-time member of platinum-selling Megadeth, which he co-founded in 1984. In their 28-year career, the metal band have sold 20 million albums, received eight Grammy nominations and built a huge and dedicated global fanbase, with Ellefson internationally recognised as a virtuoso musician.

Visit www.londonbassguitarshow.com and get your tickets as part of our Early Bird Offer for £15 until midnight on 22 October. After that, they'll cost you £17.50 in advance, with tickets on the door at £20.

You can also get updates about new additions to the event by hitting 'Like' on our Facebook page.

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

BAXTER BASS-ICS

Founded in 2009, Andy Baxter Bass has established itself as a key place to shop for both new and used basses in Greater London. Andy Baxter himself is a specialist in vintage bass guitars, working with musicians, collectors and dealers around the globe to bring you unique and characterful instruments. Fender, Gibson, Rickenbacker and Music Man are among the range of new basses that he stocks. We'll be interviewing him shortly, but in the meantime we couldn't wait to share his site with you. Check it out at www.andybaxterbass.com.

ROAD WARRIOR

The Pro's On The Road Survival Kit

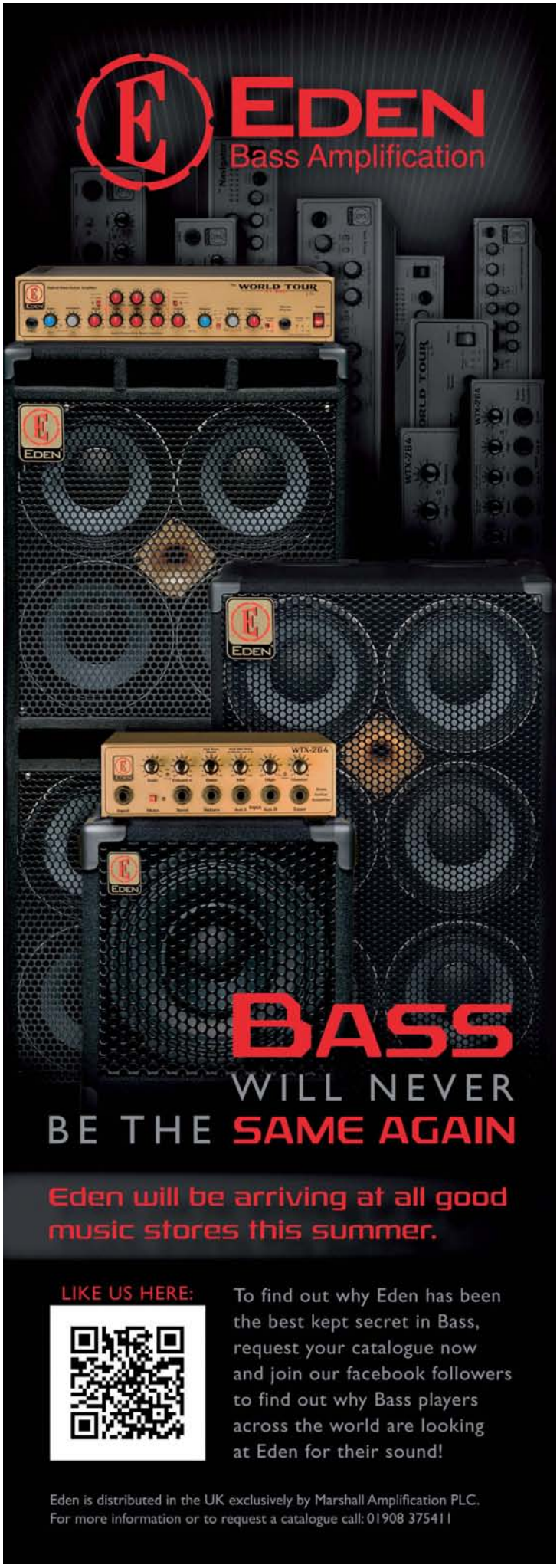
Name: Steve Fishman (aka Steve Lawrence)
Current gig: Hugh Cornwell
Website: www.stevefishman.99k.org

1 HUNTING KIT
I collect vintage basses, so I always have a laptop or iPad to look up shops and scour free ads, and an iPhone to call and navigate. I call beforehand and try to meet en route or at the venue to do the deal. It's tricky on a tight schedule and sometimes I miss good 'uns.

2 PROTECTION. NO, NOT THAT KIND...
An extra soft case for the two cool basses I hope to find on the journey. I use a hard SKB golf case to carry basses.

3 HEDGE FUNDS
Otherwise known as cash that the missus doesn't know about. She has this absurd notion that I have enough gear. Yeah right! What's that about? She's only seen 20 basses and a dozen guitars. One woman, many instruments, I say.

4 SKYPE
I can reach home anywhere, even on a bus, as long as I like, for free. The greatest invention of all for when you're away from loved ones. Must remember to hide the aforementioned acquisitions, though.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TRIUMVIRATE

Each month we select three essential albums from a genre or player.
This month:

THRASH METAL

1 MEGADETH, RUST IN PEACE
Why You Need It: This was the album where Megadeth stepped out of the looming shadow of Metallica and propelled themselves to the top of the thrash tree. For any metal bass player, David Ellefson's playing is inspirational. His super-tight unison riffing on 'Holy Wars' is nothing short of astonishing, while tracks such as 'Hangar 18' see him on chug-tastic form, powering the band along. 'Dawn Patrol' is driven by his melody line, and his scooped mid, pick-driven tone must rank among the best in thrash.

2 ANTHRAX, AMONG THE LIVING
Why You Need It: This 1987 effort from the mad moshers saw them break through to mainstream success: they're unrelenting throughout. Frank Bello, who had replaced original bassist Danny Lilker, has a monstrous tone on the album, most notably on the title track and 'A Skeleton In The Closet'. Playing with his fingers, Bello keeps pace with the frantic drums and guitar riffs, always solid and often playing something a little different to the usual root notes. Other standouts include 'I Am The Law' and the legendary 'Caught In A Mosh'.

3 METALLICA, MASTER OF PUPPETS
Why You Need It: How great a bass player Cliff Burton would have become, we'll never know. Yet, with the three albums he recorded with Metallica, he left an indelible mark on the world of metal bass playing, particularly with this final album. From the machine-gun lines of 'Battery' to the melodic sliding fills of 'Sanitarium', Burton plays with restraint and taste. On 'Orion', he steps out with a signature classical melody in the middle portion of the song, and there's a blistering bass solo towards the end, too.

Why we love... Marcus Miller

Standout Tracks: 'Power', 'Nikki's Groove', 'Tutu', 'Could It Be You'
Recommended Albums: *M2, Tutu, Closer To The Source*

When it comes to all-out mastery of the bass guitar, it's hard to beat Marcus Miller. From supple, melodic fretless playing, to high-powered slap and deep pockets, Marcus covers all the bases. Getting his initial break with the legendary Miles Davis, Miller overcame his initial tag as a Jaco clone to become the leader of the post-Pastorius pack. With Davis he recorded a slew of top albums, most notably *Tutu*, for which he composed the majority of the material. The title track is a great example of Miller at his best, with a thudding thumbed groove and melodic finger lines weaving in and around Davis' trumpet.

A prolific solo artist, Miller has been cutting his own material since the early 80s, and landed a Grammy award for Best Contemporary Jazz Album for *M2*, which features tour de force tracks such as 'Power' (a must for the slap freaks among you) and 'Nikki's Groove'. Like all the greats, though, Miller knows when to lay back and drive things along with a funky groove, as he did on numerous tracks with pop-soul legend Luther Vandross, Carly Simon, Billy Idol and a plethora of top artists. As sideman or bandleader, the Big M knows how to deliver, and for that we salute him.

ROAR POWER

Iron Maiden founder and bass icon Steve Harris has announced that he will release his debut solo album, *British Lion*. The record will consist of 10 songs that Steve and his collaborators have been working on down the years. The producer for the album is Kevin Shirley, whose credits include Iron Maiden, Led Zeppelin, Journey, Rush and more. In relation to the title, Steve said, "I've always been proud to be British, and I don't see any reason why I shouldn't be. It's not like I'm flag-waving or trying to preach, this is not a political statement at all. It's like supporting your local football team, and I think it lends itself to some really strong imagery, too." In Iron Maiden's incredible 35-year career, they've sold 85 million records and played more than 2000 gigs in 58 countries. Look out for an interview with the great man in our next issue.

RAVISHING

Win A Ravish Pedal

You may recall our review of Electro-Harmonix's ace Ravish effects pedal back in *Issue 79*. It's the only pedal we've encountered thus far that makes your bass sound like a sitar, simultaneously inducing cravings for chicken madras and one of those dustbin-lid-sized poppadoms. Well, the fragrant folks at EHX in New York have supplied us with one to give away for free. If you want it, and we warn you, it'll make you hungry, email the editor pronto with the answer to this question:

Which Rolling Stones song features a prominent sitar line?

A Paint It, Black
B Jumpin' Jack Flash
C Brown Sugar

Make sure to visit www.ehx.com and join the mailing list to get all the latest Electro-Harmonix news.

REVOLVER

Every month we reveal a bass-line that we can't get out of our heads…

This Month: **'GUERILLA RADIO'**

Bassist *Tim Commerford, Rage Against The Machine*
Album *The Battle Of Los Angeles (1999)*

They say that pets resemble their owners… well, in the case of Tim Commerford, bass-lines resemble the player – huge, muscular and seemingly hewn from granite. Nowhere is this evidenced better than on this track from Rage Against The Machine's 1999 album *The Battle of Los Angeles*. With tighter-than-tight unison riffing, Tim creates a crushing sonic wall with Tom Morello and Brad Wilk, before laying down a funky line in the verse. We love the greasy double stop and wiry staccato line that bounces up the fretboard. His tone under the solo is nothing short of immense, and the groove is as deep as it is wide. We challenge you to not want to go and smash something after listening to this song.

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No Doubt, bringing the ska to the punk to the pop

BASS IN THE USA

Jon D'Auria reports from the bass scene across the pond

The hot months are coming to an end here in the States, but there's still plenty to be excited about, with some big album releases and tours on the way. We just hope you haven't already spent all your hard-earned summer job pay on basses…

The 11-year drought is over for the California band No Doubt, as their poppy ska-meets-reggae sound returns on the long-awaited new album, *Push And Shove*. On 'Settle Down', the band's first single from the record, reggae-pop bass pioneer Tony Kanal leads singer Gwen Stefani, drummer Adrian Young and guitarist Tom Dumont with a big dancehall bass-line peppered with the occasional slap and pop. Kanal's presence on the new record is upfront; he conjures dub and synth tones that fill out the bottom end, while the band mesh shades of their original style with touches of modern sounds. No Doubt began writing songs for the record in 2008, but scrapped their initial work to compile something that would satisfy all of their musical tastes. "We started writing back in 2008 when Gwen was pregnant with her second son, Zuma," explains Kanal. "We spent that year trying to write, but we hit a block."

Luckily, they conquered this block and wrapped up their recording sessions with Mark 'Spike' Stent in the spring of this year. Kanal, who has produced and written songs for Pink, the Pussycat Dolls and Stefani's solo albums, employed his usual Yamaha BB basses for *Push and Shove*, while mixing synth bass over some lines to add depth and distortion. The record hits stores on September 25 and we're expecting a tour announcement shortly after.

Meanwhile The Killers will be presenting their fourth studio album, *Battle Born*, on September 18. After riding the success of previous record *Day & Age* (2008), the band claim that the new album was more difficult to approach, but that they feel triumphant after completing it. Bassist Mark Stoermer put a lot of effort into the writing process, which he began directly after the release of his first solo record, *Another Life* (2011). Stoermer reported to us on the process of tracking bass on *Battle Born*. "My sound has changed from album to album, but on this one I used something similar to my set-up on the first record, which was an Ampeg SVT head played through a Hi-Watt cabinet. I like that combination, because it's a 350-watt head combined with a cabinet that is only supposed to run at 200 watts, so I don't turn it up all the way. It gets a great sound; tone was everything for me on this album. It really had to convey a lot, given the direction of the new songs." The band will spend most of the fall and winter touring in support of *Battle Born*.

The trio of big September releases wouldn't be complete without a mention of *Away From The World*, the eighth album from the Dave Matthews Band. Bassist Stefan Lessard and company's new masterpiece has already spawned the singles 'Sweet' and 'Mercy'. On first listen, it might sound like a simple continuation of their mellow love song approach, but key-in to the low end and you'll hear Lessard's fast-fingered, run-filled basslines beginning to take centre stage. The band has already debuted many of the album's 11 songs during their live performances. Lessard recently commented on their collaboration with longtime producer Steve Lillywhite. "It just felt like the right time to work with Steve again. He was the perfect man for the music that Dave put in front of us. I didn't do any overdubs for this record, because everything was done live, playing with Carter [Beauford] and Dave. The guitar, drums and bass are all pretty much from tracks that we were playing together." The band will celebrate the release with a run of shows.

One recent release that sent shockwaves through the critical world is singer-songwriter Fiona Apple's latest album, *The Idler Wheel*. Though she didn't work with bass phenomenon Mike Elizondo this time round, she did employ the playing of her old friend, bassist Sebastian Steinberg. Known for his expert work on both the upright and electric bass, Steinberg has played with the likes of Eddie Vedder, Radiohead's Ed O'Brien and Phil Selway, Vanessa Carlton and many others. Steinberg's work on the new material covers a lot of ground, from ragtime-esque jazz lines to driving electric ballads. His diverse playing complements Apple's wide vocal range, and he'll be joining her on tour in the US throughout September and October. ■

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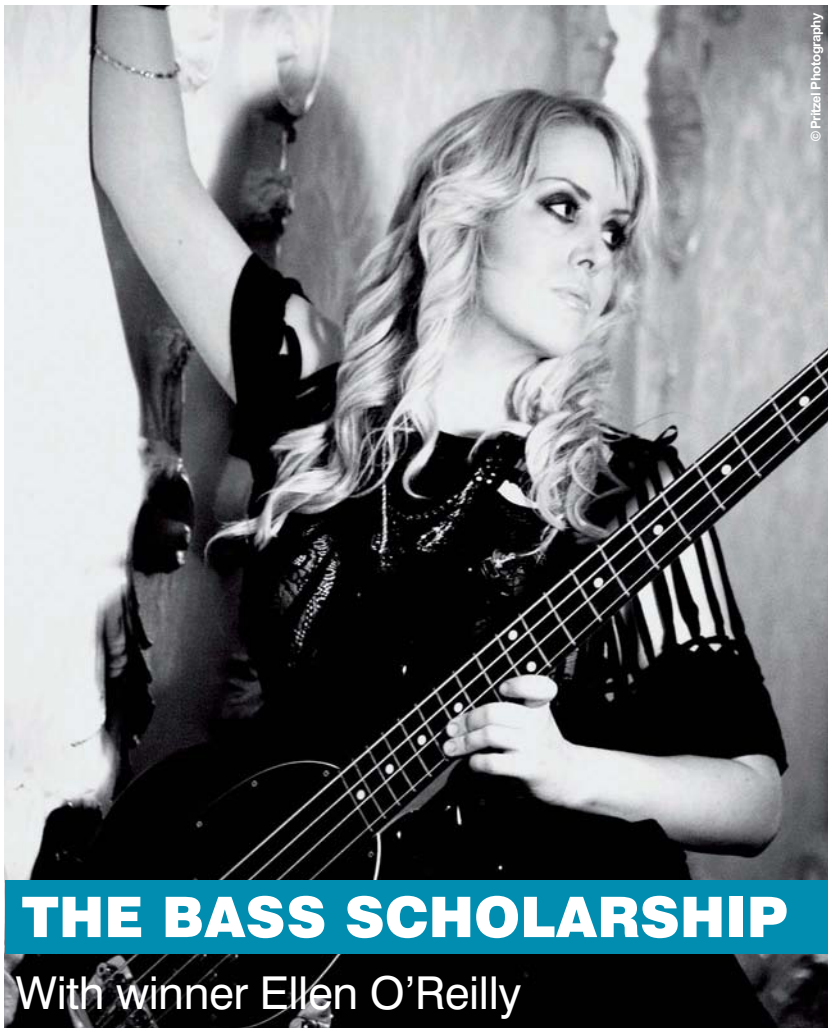

THE BASS SCHOLARSHIP

With winner Ellen O'Reilly

Fáilte fellow low-enders! I write this from back home in Ireland, as I've recently completing my Higher Diploma exams. It was a bit of a struggle time-wise, with the gigs and everything else going on, but I felt that my performance pieces of the harmonic waltz and the Bach cello prelude went great. I managed to get my written work in on time and the fret skills exam went well, too. My only worry is the sight-reading. I got a little stressed during that one so I have my fingers crossed… damn those tricky syncopated sixteenths! One of the assignments we had to hand in was called Professional Musician Portfolio, which involved us learning how to promote ourselves using websites, Facebook pages, Youtube channels, musician CVs and Twitter accounts. Luckily, I had practically everything done already as I set about getting my website done during the summer after I had won the scholarship. After the exams I was committed to recording a promotional video with the other scholarship winners. We spent about a day and a half making the video, playing and recording live and re-recording vocals. It was a great experience and I'm looking forward to the final product. For now, though, it's great to be home so I can focus on Shannon & The Shortcuts, as we are in the middle of getting a new EP together and have enlisted the services of a PR and marketing company to get ourselves more exposure. Though we're getting a fair bit of radio airplay here in Ireland, it's time to get the name out in the UK. Meanwhile we have a few good gigs coming up, supporting Alabama 3 in Belfast and playing festivals such as Electric Picnic, so hopefully that will boost our profile. We are getting together regularly for writing and demo recording sessions too, so it's all hands on deck. However, I'm looking forward to getting back to London in September to get stuck into the Degree – it's going to be a huge gear-shift up from the Higher Diploma, but I can't wait for the challenge. I'm sad, however, about being separated from my classmates as some of them are not staying on at the ICMP. It was an emotional day after our last exam, as we said our goodbyes over a few drinks. I'm going to miss those guys and I wish them all good luck for the future. Keep it low!

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BASSICALLY SPEAKING

New, hot and funky bass players introduce themselves

TONY NEWTON

Voodoo Six

My first bass was an SG, I can't remember the make but it wasn't very good! The best-looking bass I ever owned was a 1963 black Gibson Thunderbird, and I still regret selling it. My favourite-sounding bass is the one I've customised and own now, a hybrid Fender Jazz/Precision. The secret of playing bass well is locking in with the drummer and listening to what the guitars, vocals and other instruments are doing. Choose the right places to add runs. My bass style is groovy, with an aggressive edge, and I've never been influenced by the slap style because it doesn't appeal to me. I play with a pick as I prefer the tone it gives. I do not play five- and six-string basses, because I can't get on with the wider neck, but I detune so I get the effect I need. My bass heroes are Cliff Williams, Doug Pinnick, Glenn Hughes and John Paul Jones: the greatest bass player that ever lived is Geezer Butler. As for me, I played guitar in Iron Maiden for two weeks in 1998, for TV appearances in Spain and Sweden. I am also a recording engineer and I recorded the Iron Maiden *En Vivo* DVD. We have just finished our third album and we will be on tour around the album release in September.

www.voodoosix.com

GEAR

Bass Fender Jazz body/Precision neck hybrid, Fender Jazz, Yamaha Attitudes
Effects Dunlop wah, Tech21 XXL drive
Amp Ampeg SVIIP preamp, Ampeg SVT 300 power amp, Orange AD200

OLI STANTON

None The Less

I try to keep things simple, but interesting and creative at the same time. Being in a fast-paced rock band I need to keep the power and base of the sound consistent, which is what I strive to achieve. I stay close to the root notes when is it needed most, and in breakdowns I have some fun to add that layer of activity where it needs it. As a bass player in a band I prefer to focus my playing style on consistency to anything else. I used to own a five-string Fender Jazz, and I was a five-string player for some time, but after a while I craved the feel of a four-string again and went back to my roots. You can be a lot more creative with a five-string, I found, but I wasn't comfortable, and for the time being I am a dedicated four-string player. The secret of playing bass well is to be a solid, consistent bass player, with a tight relationship with the drums. My first bass was an Ibanez GSR200 in bright blue, it sounds as cheap as it was and has no knobs on it… I've still got it! My favourite bass ever to date has to be a Gibson Les Paul bass or a Rickenbacker – they have different but incredible sounds. I love anything vintage when it comes to basses, especially Gibson. My bass heroes are John Entwistle, Jaco Pastorius, Duff McKagan, James Leach and Stu Hamm. Quite a variety, but all incredible in their fields. The greatest bass player that ever lived was John Entwistle from The Who, he always was and will be the greatest bass player.

www.myspace.com/nonethelessonline

GEAR

Bass Fender Precision
Effects Sansamp Bass Driver, Noise Suppressor
Amp Ampeg B2RE head, Ashdown cab

BOBBY TOWN

Seven Deadly

I would describe my bass style as pretty aggressive, purely as the drums and guitars are monster in Seven Deadly. I recently switched from fingerstyle to mainly pick, to really tighten my sound and the overall feel of the music. I've gone from six strings, to five, back to simplicity with a four-string bass. I play in a heavy metal band, not a jazz-funk vegetarian progressive grindcore-style folk band. I was never a big fan of Seinfeld, shocking huh? So no, I'm not a slapper. The secret of playing bass well is feel it, don't just play it. Lock in tight with the drums, groove with the guitars and don't be afraid to keep things simple. There's nothing wrong with keeping it simple for the most part and adding a bit of razzle-dazzle now and again. My first bass was one of those 'Axe' packaged basses. It wasn't great but it got me into my first band. My favourite bass ever to date is my five-string Ibanez SR-505. I saved up hard for that and it was my pride and joy before I moved up to the six-string model. Being endorsed by, and working with, the guys at Ibanez is a real treat. My bass heroes are Steve Harris, Billy Sheehan, John Myung and Frankie Bello. The greatest bass player that ever lived was Cliff Burton, pound for pound, from his look, stage presence, his playing and his take on music... one of a kind. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, it would be a toss up between those used by Rush's Geddy Lee or Kings X's Dug Pinnick. Bassists, just like everyone else in the band, are here to add something and make a difference. Get out there and stand out from the crowd.

www.sevendeadly1.com

GEAR

Bass Ibanez **Effects** Line 6, Boss **Amp** Laney Nexus

GEAR

Bass Warwick Corvette Standard, Spector Legend 4
Effects EHX Bass Big Muff, Sansamp BDDI, Ibanez PD-7, DOD FX25B, Boss TU-2
Amp Ampeg SVT 3-Pro, Ashdown 4x10

PAUL PIRIE

Late Landing

I don't slap, mainly because I can't! Don't get me wrong, I play around with slap at home and love the sound, but I feel slap bass is pretty hard to get right. It's almost a separate instrument. I wouldn't do it justice. The secret of playing bass well is to really work on your timing and lock in with the drummer to find that groove. They don't call it a rhythm section for nothing. I would describe my bass style as aggressive yet groovy. I've never felt the need to play five- or six-string basses. They call them 'extended range basses', but I've never felt that my range on a four-string was limited. My favourite bass ever to date would be my main gigging bass: my Corvette Standard. It's one of the original German-made ones and it looks, feels, plays and sounds better than any other bass I've played. My bass heroes are Victor Wooten, Ben Kenney, Geddy Lee, Rob Trujillo, and John Paul Jones to name a few. The greatest player that ever lived would have to be Geddy Lee. You can't help but respect a man who has been playing as well as that for as long as he has. And that tone – wow! If I could get the tone of any album ever released, though, it would be Audioslave's self-titled album, or indeed anything by Tim Commerford. He was the first bassist to literally give me goosebumps with his tone. The main thing to remember as a bassist is that you have chosen a 'supporting instrument' not a leading one. The term 'just a bassist' will get thrown around a lot, believe me. You have to learn to be OK with that and know you're actually a vital role in the band. My band and I are currently promoting our debut album, *Caught In The Middle*, and gigging as much as possible.

www.latelanding.co.uk

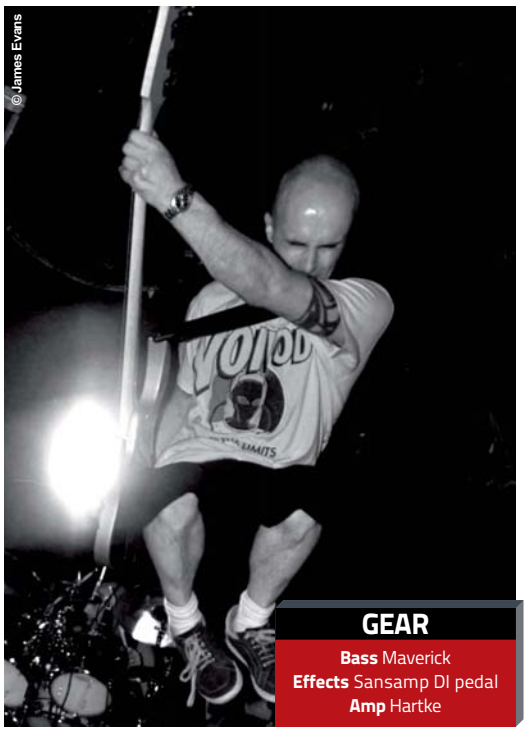
GEAR

Bass Fender Precision
Effects None
Amp Yorkville Bass Master 400, 1x15 cab

CASSANDRA GEORGE
Cave Of The Swallows

My main playing bass is a black 2008 Schecter Diamond series Stiletto Sub-Bass. I got this second-hand as a right-handed bass, then turned it upside-down and set it up as a leftie. I had everything turned all the way up to 11, then removed all the dials so they don't get in the way. It's all or nothing with this one. I would describe my bass style as solid as a rock. Cave Of The Swallows is a three-piece, so it's vital to lock in with the drums and guitar and slam out massive riffs to get the fattest possible sound. No nonsense, no cheap tricks, just solid, tight and relentless… with fingers. I do not slap, not only because I suck at it, but because it doesn't suit the style of music that we play: it's just not the sound that we are looking to incorporate. The secret of playing bass well is practice. Know what you're playing inside out, every note, every aspect and then rehearse the shit out of it until your callouses get blood blisters underneath them, and then some. My very first bass was an impulse buy. I woke up one morning and wanted to play bass, and so I just went out and bought one! It was a black, entry-level Yamaha. It was good to learn on: I actually recorded my first EP with it, and it sounded pretty good. My favourite bass ever to date would probably be my modified Schecter. It was cheap, but I love it. It's lightweight, the neck is thin and it produces a great tone. I love to customise my own basses to the exact way I like them, plus I like the fact that no one else has exactly the same one. My bass heroes are varied – Geezer Butler, Tim Commerford, James Jamerson plus so many others. Players that have inspired countless amounts of people to pick up and start learning bass and continue to be better players, including myself. The greatest bass player that ever lived is probably someone no-one has heard of. There's too many different players and different styles to narrow it down. One more thing – it doesn't matter how good a bass player you are or how much you're shredding on stage: having your bass up on your chest just isn't cool.

www.facebook.com/caveoftheswallows



© James Evans

GEAR

Bass Maverick
Effects Sansamp DI pedal
Amp Hartke

IAN GLASPER Freebase

The secret of playing bass well is to leap about like a maniac to hide the inevitable bum notes. The first bass I bought was an Aria Pro II Cat. Prior to that I would use and abuse anything my friends lent me – a battered Fender copy with a severely bowed neck comes to mind. My favourite bass ever to date is probably the Maverick I'm playing now. It's like an old friend and I feel comfortable in its presence, no matter how crap I am… plus it was free. Shame they've gone out of business though, because it's hard to get parts for it. Luckily I got given two! My bass heroes are Cliff Burton, of course. Who else? Actually Les Claypool and JJ Burnel, too. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I'd probably choose *Practice What You Preach* by Testament or something by Anthrax or Overkill. DD Verni has the best bass tone in metal, I think. Mind you, 'Ain't No Feeble Bastard' by Discharge still kicks my arse every time I hear it. Always record the bass tracks last when doing an album. You can claim that it allows the producer to find exactly the right place in the mix where it doesn't detract from the punch of the bass drums and the crunch of the guitar... and it does... but the real reason is you don't have to hang around in the studio all week and listen to the guitarist and drummer programming click tracks! Freebase have just released the 'From The Basement' 7" on Dry Heave Records, and Cherry Red have just published my fourth book on the UK punk scene, Armed With Anger: How UK Punk Survived The Nineties. Google Freebase, Stampin' Ground, Suicide Watch, Decadence Within or Flux Of Pink Indians and you'll find me. You can get my books from Amazon or Cherry Red... you know, if you suffer from insomnia or anything. ***www.facebook.com/FreebaseUKHC***

SHAUN GLASS

Broken Hope

GEAR

Bass ESP Viper 414 and Surveyor
Effects None
Amp Ampeg SVT

The secret of playing bass well is timing and locking in with the drummer as it is so key to the sound of the band. Guys like Geezer Butler built their style on that angle of playing and those are the guys who I always admired. I would describe my bass style as solid, in the pocket, aggressive and punchy. I can slap but I am far from a funk player. I'll leave that to the guys who are true pros at that sound. I never liked bassists in metal who tried adding funk into the sound. I do not play five- or six-string bass, because I really never felt as a player I needed the other strings for the Broken Hope sound. We are tuned to D, and the extra strings are not needed to achieve what I am looking for. I prefer a tighter sound. My bass heroes? I love Cliff Burton as well as Jason Newsted, plus guys like DD Verni of Overkill, who never gets the credit he deserves. Alex Webster from Cannibal Corpse is another monster player. My childhood gods were and will always be Geezer Butler, Steve Harris and Pete Way, as they are the men who made me want to pick up a bass. The greatest bass player that ever lived? That's hard, but obviously Jaco was such an amazing player and truly influenced many. John Entwistle of The Who was a beast on the bass and a key part of rock music's tone. Never give up. Never let the industry beat you down, and never stop practising!

www.brokenhope.com

KYLE HAGGERTY

The Lash

© Lloyd Miller

GEAR

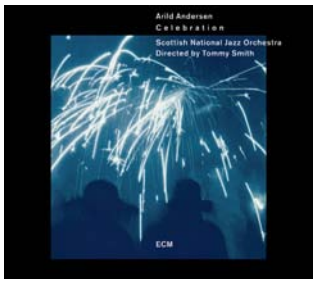
Bass MusicMan Sub, Ibanez ATK200, Ibanez AGB200
Effects None
Amp Orange Terror Bass 500 head, Orange SP210 Isobaric cabinet

My bass style is a combination of funk, soul and blues. I grew up listening to these styles as a kid and was influenced by Sly & The Family Stone, James Brown and the Red Hot Chili Peppers, because their songs really got me listening to bass-lines a lot more. Slapping was one of the bass styles I was really fascinated by, ever since watching Flea do it in the music video for 'Aeroplane'. However, in The Lash I use more soulful walking bass-lines as opposed to slapping. The secret is constant practice and always keeping your options and influences open. Never dismiss new music, as it could lead to an improvement of your ability as a bass player. My first bass was an Encore Precision copy that I bought from my local Cash Generator for £100. Today it is broken in half in my mother's attic and that's more than it deserves. My favourite bass ever to date is my Music Man Sub, because I remember saving my money by working as a cleaner in my dad's butcher shop just to buy it. That bass will always be in my live set-up. My bass heroes? There are so many, such as Les Claypool, Flea, Victor Wooten, Larry Graham, Marcus Miller, Stanley Clarke, Jaco Pastorius, and Bootsy Collins. I could go on and on. The greatest bass player that ever lived? For me it would have to be Flea, hands down. If I hadn't seen the Red Hot Chili Peppers in Cardiff Millennium Stadium in 2004, I probably would have become a guitarist. Remember that a bass is a bass, not a four-stringed guitar. Be distinct, be unique and don't ever be the instrumental equivalent of a backing singer!

www.facebook.com/thelashofficial

IN THE GROOVE

Music from the bass world, reviewed and rated by Mike Flynn, Ben Cooper and Spencer Grady



Arild Andersen/Scottish National Jazz Orchestra

Celebration

Music ★★★ **Playing** ★★★★

There's a very fertile jazz scene in Scotland, and this record perfectly encapsulates both its richness and spirit of adventure via the talent-heavy SNJO, its storming sax-toting director Tommy Smith and an esteemed international guest, bassist Arild Andersen. The latter Norwegian is among Europe's jazz bass elite – a long list that also includes the likes of the late and very great Niels-Henning Pedersen, George Mraz, Palle Danielsson and our own Dave Holland (even if he's based in the US…). Andersen established himself in the 1970s with Nordic saxophonist Jan Garbarek's quartet, which also included guitarist Terje Rypdal and drummer Jon Christensen. His subsequent international career featured stints with the likes of Sonny Rollins and Chick Corea, but more recently he has led a fiery trio alongside Smith on sax and drummer Paolo Vinaccia, plus a quintet that features Polish pianist Marcin Wasilewski. Here, this expansive and enthralling contemporary jazz set blasts out of the gate with a thundering take on Dave Holland's 'May Dance' that has Smith spitting notes, while young drum star Alyn Cosker whips up a merry storm on the kit. Andersen proves just how vital the double bass can be in both support and lead roles, soloing with lithe lyricism, but able to power down into the grooves, too. Sweeping and magisterial stuff from one of the great modern jazz bass masters, swept along by some of Scotland's finest, *Celebration* more than lives up to its name. **[MF]**

Hugh Cornwell

Totem And Taboo

Music ★★★ **Playing** ★★★★

Some artists never seem to tire of the creative process. You'd think that after achieving international stardom and icon status with the Stranglers, plus a string of solo albums, Hugh Cornwell would be kicking back and taking it easy, but the man's still hard at work. His latest album sees him on fine form and ably assisted by Steve Fishman on bass.

Fishman has some big boots to fill, considering that Cornwell will always be identified with JJ Burnel's huge bass riffs, but he steps up to the mark with aplomb, delivering driving, crunchy basslines on the title track, 'The Face' and 'I Want One Of Those'. The main bass riff of 'God Is A Woman' is a bit too close to 'Badge' for our liking (although this is a fact to which Cornwell admits in the notes), and although Fishman lays down some tasty fills elsewhere, that riff is just too much. His clanky pick tones are all over 'Love Me Slender', first locked tight with the drums, then stepping out for some exposed fills. Fishman also has a tone to die for on this track. The album closes on 'In The Dead Of Night', which breaks into a snaky bass ostinato, the bedrock of the song.

All in all, though, it's a pretty good album from Mr. Cornwell, and Steve Fishman's melodic bass playing is important to each and every track. **[BC]**

Smashing Pumpkins

Oceania

Music ★★★★★ **Playing** ★★★

Billy Corgan recently stated that the Smashing Pumpkins could continue to record and tour after he's called it a day, a statement that must have sent many a moody teenager huffing to their bedroom before throwing themselves face down on to the bed, making a mess of the clean pillowcases their mothers had put on that morning. Throughout a shifting line-up of musicians, the one constant of the legendary alt-rockers has been Corgan, whence the creative wellsprings flow. Perhaps the band could indeed continue without him, but whether they'd be able to make an assured album such as *Oceania* is uncertain. It's a mature effort which should please existing fans, while also sounding different and fresh.

The bass is handled by Nicole Fiorentino (the Pumpkins have always been a platform for female bassists), who knocks out some decent lines. There's nothing flashy here, just solid and melodic rock bass. The album opens with a brace of rockers, 'Quasar' and 'Panopticon', and on the latter Fiorentino steps out with some nimble playing under the wall of guitars. 'The Celestials' includes nice upper-register work along with some low end riffing, while 'My Love Is Winter' allows Fiorentino's metallic tones space to breathe.

It's a fantastic album, and although Fiorentino's playing is not groundbreaking, it's absolutely perfect for the material. Let's hope that rumours of Corgan's retirement are just that, as it'd be a shame to lose music as good as this. **[BC]**

Grégoire Maret

Grégoire Maret

Music ★★★★ **Playing** ★★★★

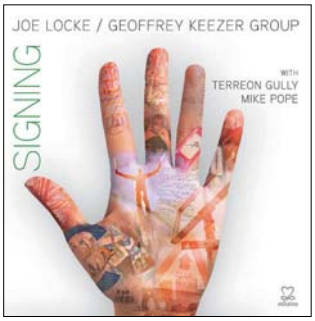
Finding a good harmonica player in jazz is almost as hard as finding a good banjo player – see Béla Fleck's singular career for that – and when one comes along, they end up getting all the gigs. Such is the case for the Swiss-born virtuoso Grégoire Maret, whose career to date reads like a who's-who of the jazz and pop worlds. His lyrical harp has graced live and studio projects by the likes of Youssou N'Dour, Me'Shell Ndegeocello, Pete Seeger, David Sanborn, George Benson and Cassandra Wilson. With so many names in his Rolodex and plenty of favours accrued, it's no surprise that Maret's debut solo album features several colleagues and former employers on a lush, at times elegiac, suite of music that ebbs and flows with the kind of yearning emotions that his subtle harmonica work so effortlessly evokes. Maret's free-flowing fusion gets its soft edge from the harmonica's slightly subdued sound, and his solos require close listening as the punchy rhythm section of bass-great James Genus and the frenetic drumming of Clarence Penn bustles along. The gorgeous, sultry vocals of Cassandra Wilson add lustre to 'The Man I Love' while guest bass ace Marcus Miller's snaking fretless weaves its way through the stirring 'Crepuscule Suite', an album highlight that's full of delights. **[MF]**

Gun
Break The Silence

Music ★★★ **Playing** ★★★

OK, let me make an admission: Gun hold a small but very special place in my heart. Their cover of Cameo's 'Word Up' is a song I've moshed to while blind drunk (in my younger years of course) at a metal club I used to frequent, so just bear that in mind as you read on. This is an unapologetically unhip album, and for that reason it should be applauded. The band aren't trying to storm the charts here, but are merely making music their fans will like and having a damned good time while doing it.

Bassist Derek Brown keeps things tight, pounding out root notes like his life depends on it, and that's just what's required for this kind of material. 'Butcher Man' and '14 Stations' exude a strutting attitude and energy that's missing from today's art-school graduate 'rock' bands (You miserable old git – Ed). 'Lost & Found' could have been the result of a drunken jam session between Kiss and Poison, and I say that with no malice: it rocks. The whole album is full of the big choruses and melodic guitar riffs that were supposed to have died on Sunset Strip in the early 90s. Sure it gets a tad corny in places, but it's a solid effort. Welcome back, boys. **[BC]**



Joe Locke/Geoffrey Keezer Group
Signing

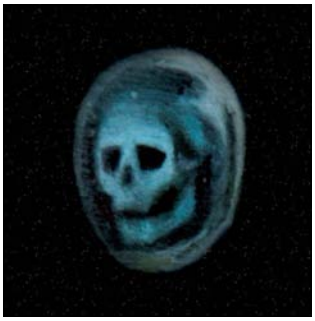
Music ★★★★ **Playing** ★★★★

Take four supremely gifted musicians, add intelligently-written original music and some sparkling, high-energy performances, and you have a very fine album indeed. That's the case here for this vibes/piano-led quartet from master four-mallet man Joe Locke and versatile keyboard virtuoso Geoffrey Keezer, on their first bona fide studio album in a band formation. Locke is widely regarded as one of the finest vibes players in contemporary jazz – a younger and perhaps more adventurous colleague of the superlative Gary Burton – and his career to date includes sessions with the Beastie Boys and Ron Carter among many others. Keezer emerged as a killer sideman in bass don Christian McBride's electric band of the early 2000s, and a multitude of top jazz names including Diana Krall and keys master Chick Corea. It's a tenuous link, but it's the latter's acoustic Return To Forever, as well as Weather Report, that are the jumping-off points for *Signing*, a fast and light fusion set that's propelled along by the nimble yet tasteful playing of bassist Mike Pope and drummer Terreon Gully. Pope also produced this album at his home studio, and there's a real feeling of intimacy and communication here, especially on the exquisite reading of Imogen Heap's powerful a cappella song 'Hide And Seek', played simply and effectively for maximum melodic impact. It's to their collective credit that *Signing* combines rich melodic layers, complex musical concepts and many moments of individual brilliance. Tasteful fusion never sounded so good. **[MF]**

Easy Star All-Stars
Easy Star's Thrillah

Music ★★★★★ **Playing** ★★★★

I grew up on Michael Jackson's *Thriller*: it's an album that defined a generation and those after it too. It's not an album to cover, it just isn't. I tried really hard to loathe this album, I swear, but goddamnit I just couldn't, so lovingly has the material been handled. Obviously you've got an album of amazing music, so it'd be hard to balls this up, but as most cover versions prove, it's a lot easier than you'd think to destroy what made a song great. I won't bother discussing the tunes here: if you don't know the tracklisting to Thriller then shame on you. What I will say is that the assembled group of reggae stars and musicians on this album sure know how to play, and Yossi Fine conjures up some fantastic, bubbling bass-lines on the songs, moving from energetic funkiness to laid-back dub and back again, depending on the interpretation. The only track I couldn't get behind was the rendition of 'Beat It'. **[BC]**



Six Organs Of Admittance
Ascent

Music ★★★★ **Playing** ★★★

Those expecting to be lulled narcotic by Six Organs' meditative mantras are going to get their preconceptions blown by *Ascent's* opening QOTSA-style salvo. 'Waswasa"s proto-psych riffs submit to only the briefest interruption from a daemonic choral, before cranking up the rocking gears, even incorporating a tidy nod to Iron Maiden's duel fret-mangling attack.

Ben Chasny's decision to draft in his old muckers from Comets On Fire for this album has triggered bouts of serious ass-kicking. The effects are immediately apparent on an epic reading of 'Close To The Sky' (found in its original form on 2003's *Compathia*), where a faux-60s jaunt is resurrected as a heaven-rending slow-burn. Ben Flashman's Fender Musicmaster comes to the fore, his repetitious bass-lines providing the grumbling low end for some caustic guitar flambé. It knocks the former version into a cocked hat, recalling epic sides by Wayne Rodgers' Crystalized Movements and Major Stars along the way.

But there are more subdued moments. While the tender desolation of 'Solar Ascent' may seem a tad throwaway – an intermission of themes explored to greater effect elsewhere – the juxtaposition of mellower sections and the prevailing hullaballoo largely works well. Simply stunning are 'Your Ghost', with its Takoma-style fingerpicking, and the dreamlike sedation of 'Visions (From To)', where shimmering reverb-laden chords are buttressed by Flashman's somnolent thunder, allowing Chasny's languid croon to ooze like lava-lamp treacle. Of course, it's totally fitting that *Ascent* should reach its apex by journey's end. **[SG]**

Marcus Miller
Renaissance

Music ★★★★ **Playing** ★★★★★

If ever one needed to produce evidence that a great bass player can make a whole world of difference to even the most average band's sound and performance, then look no further than the latest, and quite possibly greatest album from Marcus Miller. His penchant for slap-led solo albums is sometimes an acquired taste, yet for this reviewer he remains one of the few bassists who can slap a lot and remain both listenable and highly musical. But this is not what makes *Renaissance* his most musically satisfying studio album since his early peak of *The Sun Don't Lie*, or the fabulous *Tales*. Ironically, it was Miller's prowess as a producer – not least with Miles Davis, Luther Vandross and David Sanborn – that neutered the raw energy of his live performances, and ended up making the likes of *Free* and *Silver Rain* sound a little too syrupy. However, Renaissance lives up to its name on a seriously heavy live-in-the-studio set which places Miller's devastatingly effective thumb attack at the heart of each tune, its thumping rhythmic power encircled by a kicking band. This includes explosive young sax star Alex Han, trumpeter Maurice Brown and drummer Louis Cato, all delivering career-defining performances. Miller sounds refreshed and inspired in such company as he turns in some of his most free-flowing and impressive thumb solos to date, alongside some sensuous fretless work too. Overflowing with superb performances and memorable music, *Renaissance* is a hard-grooving triumph. **[MF]**

TAKE FIVE

Bassists nominate five albums that shaped their playing

Steve Lawson

Steve Lawson is no ordinary bassist, writing and recording music that defies explanation. Incorporating electronic elements with bass parts of great intricacy and power, Lawson reshapes conventional ways of performing. In between his many projects, he is also an educator on the bass guitar and can be tracked down at www.stevelawson.net. Here Steve reveals a disparate set of influences…

Joni Mitchell

Hejira (1976)

I'm not, for the most part, a huge Jaco fan. I'm in awe of what he achieved, he just played on a lot of records I don't particularly enjoy listening to. And bass playing alone has never been enough for me to enjoy a record. But there are a handful of exceptions, most of them with Joni Mitchell. *Hejira* in particular is my desert island disc. Everything about it is exquisite, and Jaco's playing is the perfect foil to Joni's meandering melodies and confessional lyrics. A masterclass in melodic fretless playing.

Morphine

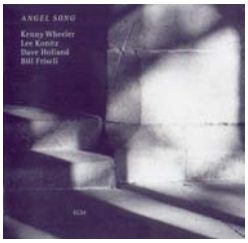
Cure For Pain (1993)

I was heartbroken when Mark Sandman died. I wrote a tune for him, on my *Not Dancing For Chicken* record. Morphine's combination of baritone sax, drums and two-string slide bass is one of those line-ups that sounds more like a dare than a band! Mark's playing was a big part of me shutting out the voices of the people who said 'You can't play bass as a solo instrument!' If he could play two strings with a slide, I could play a fretless six and loop it. Solo bassists are everywhere now, but pretty much no-one has topped Mark's vibe.

King's X

Dogman (1994)

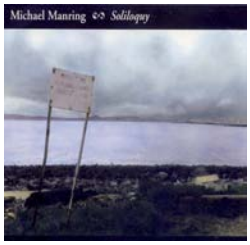
King's X are one of those bands who I don't think have ever done a song I don't like, let alone a whole album. Dug Pinnick's tone really came into its own on *Dogman*: a change of producer gave them a heavier, much rawer sound, and his bass carries it all. It's heavy, grooving, soulful, amazing music. I never tire of listening to it. I don't think anyone has yet matched the level of soulful emotion, pain and grinding heaviness that King's X achieved on *Dogman*. Still the gold standard.



Kenny Wheeler, Lee Konitz, Bill Frisell, Dave Holland

Angel Song (1997)

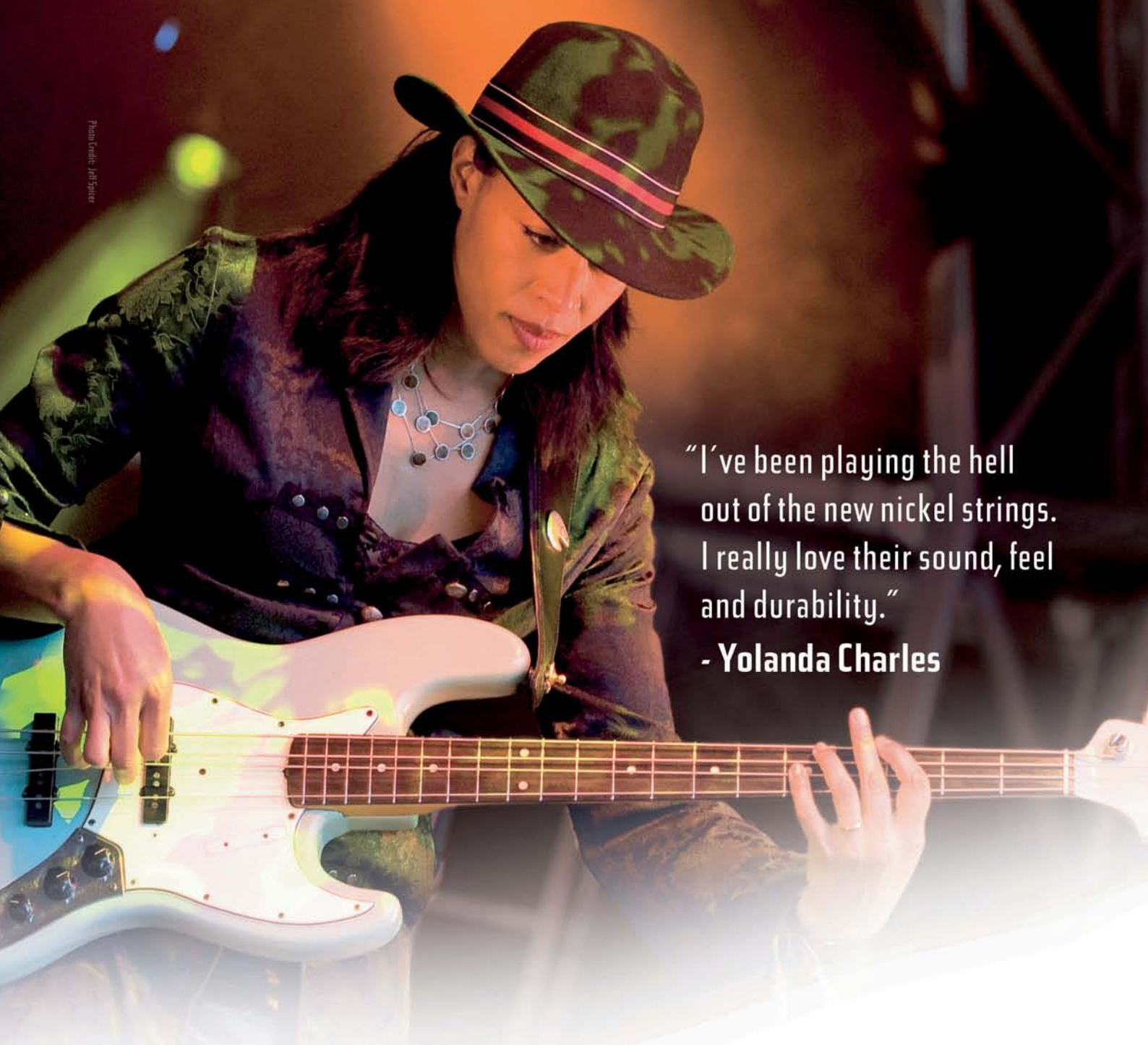
I have a particular affinity for drummerless records. The whole feel of them changes, and the role of the bassist is so different. On *Angel Song*, Dave Holland makes remarkable use of the extra space that the lack of percussion affords him: his tone is to die for, and his soloing is a masterclass in melodic improvisation. The interplay between his bass, Bill Frisell's guitar and the sax and trumpet frontline is breathtaking. Another record that never ever outstays its welcome.



Michael Manring

Soliloquy (2005)

It's almost unthinkable that it took Michael nearly 20 years from his first album under his own name to the point where he made an 'all solo bass record'. It is, to my ears, the most complete and incredible music ever written and performed for solo bass guitar. As a composer, improviser and performer, Michael is pretty much unparalleled. He's also the most fun collaborator I've ever had, and never stops surprising me no matter how many times we play together.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REMEMBERING JACO

Jaco Pastorius lost his life at the hands of a Florida bouncer in September 1987, 25 years ago as you read this. Here, the rock writer Steven Rosen presents a rarely-seen interview with the great bassist, originally conducted in 1977. Jaco talks us through his many pioneering techniques and influences in enormous detail: it is a genuine privilege to read his thoughts on an approach to the bass guitar that now informs so much of what we bassists do all these years later. RIP.

John Francis Anthony Pastorius III was born on December 1, 1951 in the state of Pennsylvania in the United States. He spent the bulk of his life in Florida and on September 21, 1987, died at the terribly young age of 36. Jaco was one of those rare individuals, a 'reluctant' visionary who changed the landscape of bass playing in a very natural way. He never set out to reinvent the function of the bass instrument but rather, propelled by a heavenly technique and dedication to becoming a better player, he almost incidentally took everything we knew about the four-stringed instrument and set it on its head. From his sound to his entire persona, Jaco had as much influence on the instrument as perhaps any other player in history.

Sadly, he was cursed with the personality of a borderline sociopath, which made it almost impossible for him to interact with other groups of musicians for any length of time. He dived headlong into drugs and towards the end of his life was almost unrecognisable to those who knew and had worked with him. In later interviews he was not so much rude as sarcastic, a manner that resulted in bad press and a negative media image. Asked once why he had decided to record his classic, self-titled solo album of 1976, he curtly responded, 'Why not?'

This writer ran into him one time in New York. Jaco was trying to get into the offices of his record label, but no one recognised him. It had been raining and he was soaked head to toe: his head was shaved, as he had been arrested on drug charges earlier, his nose was running and he wasn't wearing shoes. When he entered the plush offices, the secretaries recoiled in horror. Security was summoned and he was forcibly evicted. I tried to explain to them that this was Jaco Pastorius, an artist on their own label, but they didn't care. It was a truly sad moment.

Still, nothing can detract from the body of work Jaco created. His self-titled album was inventive, lyrical, and so obviously the work of a genius that had he never recorded again, his place in history was secured. He was the linchpin between jazz and fusion, and his work with Joni Mitchell on *Mingus*, *Shadows & Light* and *Hejira* completely revolutionised the character of electric bass in recorded music.

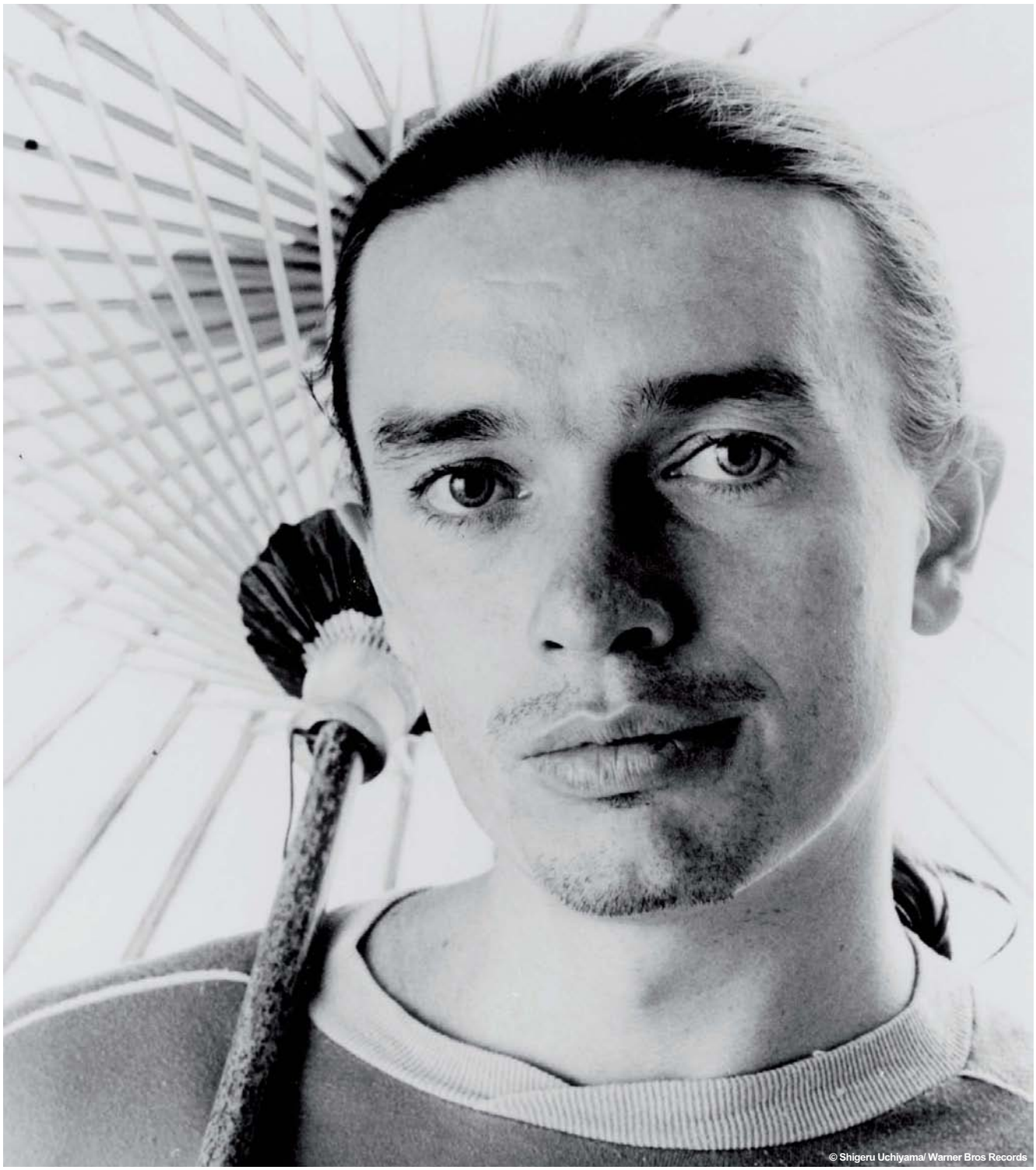
Jaco and I spoke right after the release of his album in summer 1977. He was rehearsing with Weather Report at a facility in North Hollywood, California, and the last thing he wanted to do was take time out from the schedule to sit down and talk. In fact, he engaged me in a series of ping-pong tournaments as a sort of acid test. I beat him, and although he was angry, I had proven myself. We talked – and Jaco presented himself in a surprisingly open fashion…

You were born and grew up in Florida, is that correct?
I was born in Norristown, Pennsylvania, and moved to Florida when I was seven. I've been there ever since, just about 20 years. It will be 19 years this August I've been in Fort Lauderdale.

You actually began your musical journey as a drummer.
I was playing the drums, but when I was 15 I decided to play the bass, because the drums were just too difficult and my hands were really hurting. I started playing bass and I haven't been out of work since. It was about the money: an easy way to make money.

A lot of bass players begin playing guitar and then move to bass. But not you.
No, I went straight to bass: Fender bass. I liked James Brown's music, The Beatles, Sinatra, all the good music. Mostly R&B, I was playing mostly R&B, all the soul music which in Florida was really big at the time.

Did you play with high-school bands to develop your chops?
No, I never had a music lesson. I was never in a school band, but I was in lots of bands with friends and stuff. R&B bands, dance bands. We'd play at parties and then nightclubs. I started playing in nightclubs right before I turned 16, and I kept



doing that right up until I joined Weather Report. That's where I did all my learning, right there in the club. You'd play eight sets a night, real killer stuff, going in at nine and leaving at 6:30 in the morning. Real fun stuff. Without days off, and doing shit like that for about a year and a half – that's always a lot of fun. I just kept my ears open: I'd hear good music and that was about it. I've heard music all my life. My father was a singer, still is, he's still working. My family broke up when I was real young, but I heard him when I was a little baby, so I'm sure it sort of genetically stuck in there.

It seems like you're probably a reader of music?

Yeah, self-taught. That's easy, all you've got to do is be offered a show gig, and [if] you don't know how to read anything and if that's the only way you can make money – man, you learn how to read overnight. You just concentrate and learn by ear: trial and error, that's how I learned most everything.

Was Weather Report the first truly professional gig you played – the first band you truly felt part of?

Well, no, I've done tons of professional things. But this is the first notoriety with a jazz band, or whatever you call this type of music. I wasn't going to come out and play with anybody making records until I did something on my own. I made my solo record and then I decided I would come out and work in the public eye. I didn't want to get recorded for a while. I was a composer and I had lots of compositions, and I didn't want to have to play almost inferior material. I was usually in groups where we were doing lots of original material and I was doing arranging. You know what I mean? So you get a real good workout. It was another way of going to school: other kids went to school, I just went to clubs. I hit the street and that was

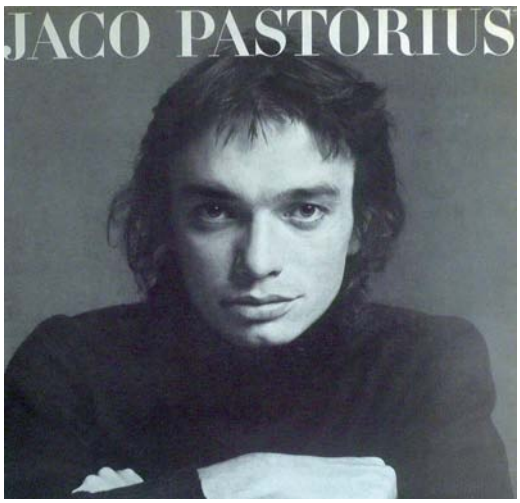
it. I've had lots of gigs – I played with Wayne Cochran & The CC Riders, which was a really great group. I played with them for a long time, but never recorded with them. I played with Paul Bley and different people. In Fort Lauderdale I've played with Nancy Wilson and the Temptations. I've played with [Johnny] Carson, Bob Hope, anybody. Show gigs. That's where I learned all my reading, [at] show gigs. And I learned to play on all the gigs.

Did you listen to other players and other records?
The last time I bought a record was eight years ago.

What do you think of a player like Stanley Clarke?
I really don't know his music. I don't know anybody's music. I didn't know Weather Report's music until I joined them, because I just didn't have the opportunity to hear it. I just didn't have the time.

Was Charlie Parker a major influence on you?
I wouldn't say my main influence, but he was definitely a big influence on me. He can definitely play some great lines, you know? I really like the way Charles Parker plays. Herbie Hancock is a big influence on me, James Brown, The Beatles. Sinatra was a killer, a real big influence on me. That tone of his voice is sort of in the same range I play in. Sort of like a baritone tenor range. When I get into that range I'm really just singing, just concentrating on the quality of each note. That's what's hard – no matter how fast I'm playing, I'm thinking of each note as it goes by. It's really trying to get the most out of each note. Technique. You have to practise all sorts of scales and shit, but mostly practise triadic shit. This is what bass players haven't practised, therefore it sounds like I'm doing something sort of new, which in fact it probably is. I just know because I would hear piano players warm up, or take a solo, or anything, and they're just really playing triadically. And that's the hardest thing to do on the bass, is to play in triads. Fast and triads, because it's

"I'm a soul man, I like to play R&B and have fun with it"



so physically hard to do. So you work in triads scale-wise: you practise dominant triads or major sevenths. If you can run through any diatonic scale, just running arpeggios up every chord in that scale, that's some of the hardest work I can get on the bass. And just the different ways you can do it – going across all four strings and trying to keep your hand in one position as long as possible, and of course then knowing the best places to change over. There aren't any books you can buy to learn how to do that. It's hard, it's physically hard, you have to be strong. Then you can learn to play some stuff. That's what's good about playing for years in all these gigs, where I put in all these ridiculous hours, and hating that I'd ever have to do that again. But if I had never done that, I definitely wouldn't be able to do what I'm up to, because you gotta have that strength. You don't get that stuff practising at home, that's on-the-job training.

How did you get started with learning theory?
At first, trying to figure out what the notes are on the bass, but outside of that I had never practised. I just went out and worked. All you have to do is think mathematically [to figure out keys]. Everyone's always trying to think too musically at

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first: you have to get the basic mathematics down and then you can go anywhere. After Wayne [Cochran], I practised for about a year, maybe one to four hours a day, and put in some real strong time. I concentrated in such a way where other people would have to put in 20 hours for every one of my one. When I concentrate, nothing else even exists. You get so involved and then it's like a motor skill, it gets completely bam, in your hand. There's no way of really losing it. You might use the adeptness or just really having a good technique, but you really won't use the moves. And then after that, you've got the motor skills down, and then you can start thinking melody because you can go everywhere. And then when you're playing a fretless, you have to worry about intonation too. That's the hardest thing, and that's where the really good, strong technique comes in, because your hand is sort of moulded into the right spacing to play in tune.

Do you listen to your record often?

No, never. I know it's good, but I'm sure it hasn't changed since I last listened to it. If there were some new notes on there or something, then I'd want to check it out. It's real good music. I had no plans at all for that, it was just something I felt

Mark King

The Level 42 bass guru salutes Jaco

"Jaco had more impact on bass than any other player, just because of the lyrical way that he played. He completely knocked down anybody's preconceptions of exactly what the bass was supposed to be able to do. That is incredibly hard to do: to embody a genre of bass playing. I'm not overdoing it when I say that – the guy was the first one out of the blocks to do the stuff that he was doing. There were contemporary players like Alphonso Johnson out there as well, who Jaco replaced in Weather Report, but there was another dimension to Jaco's playing – like the use of the harmonics, and those pumping, staccato lines that were full of sixteenths. This was radical stuff at the time, and for someone like me – I was a drummer at the time; I was just becoming a bass player – it was a fantastic calling card. It said to me that I could do anything I wanted on the bass guitar. Anything at all.

"Sadly, I never met Jaco. I did get to play with Toots Thielemans, who worked a lot with him, and he said something rather sad. I was waxing lyrical about what a fantastic inspiration Jaco had been, and he said 'It all changed when you guys [modern players like King] came along'. He was referring to the slap thing. Toots said that people wanted that, and they didn't want what Jaco was doing any more. I hope that's not true, but something in the back of my mind says that's kind of how music works: you have these cycles, and things change. If you think of all the incredible guys that Jaco worked with in his career and throughout his life, they were all stellar musicians – because genius attracts

> "Is there any Jaco in my playing? Absolutely. I don't just slap: there's a lot of fingerstyle in Level 42's music"

genius. Guys like that, who are really up there, only really want to play with the best. That's really what Jaco did, and that is his legacy: the incredible music that he left us with, and the amazing, genius musicians that he touched as well.

"Is there any Jaco in my playing? Absolutely. I don't just slap: there's a lot of fingerstyle in Level 42's music. Take a pattern like 'Kansas City Milkman' or the outro section of 'Sleep Talking': that whole bass-line is seriously Jaco-influenced. What Jaco songs would I recommend? Well, the whole of Weather Report's *Black Market* album (1976) is beautiful, but if you had to come down to one song, then 'Teen Town' is great (from *Heavy Weather*, 1977). Everything about that song is awesome. Jaco played the drums on that track too, which I really get a kick out of."

like doing and I did it. I felt the time was right to put out some music. I might do another solo record, because I have a lot of music and I'd rather record it while it's still sort of fresh. I've got music dating back so many years. It sounds good, but I like to come up with new stuff too. You keep writing new stuff and you have a ton of music that never gets played, and it doesn't really make that much sense. It's like you do so much work, and there's the cause but no effect. It doesn't go out and people don't hear it. I don't write the music for myself, I write it to get played, but you don't have all that time you need.

Your use of harmonics is a major part of your style and is heard all over the album. Where did that come from?
I've always done that. It's sort of that continuous bus ride when you're on the road. Twenty-four hours a day, every day. When I first started playing the bass I did that. In fact someone played me a tape recently, where I was playing eight or nine years ago, and it sounded like now. All the harmonics were there and everything. I just thought they were all part of the instrument. I didn't question it. There was no records I could turn on and hear someone doing that. So I just tuned up and, 'Hey, man, that sounds good'. I hit a bass note here, and hit a couple of those, and it was that simple.

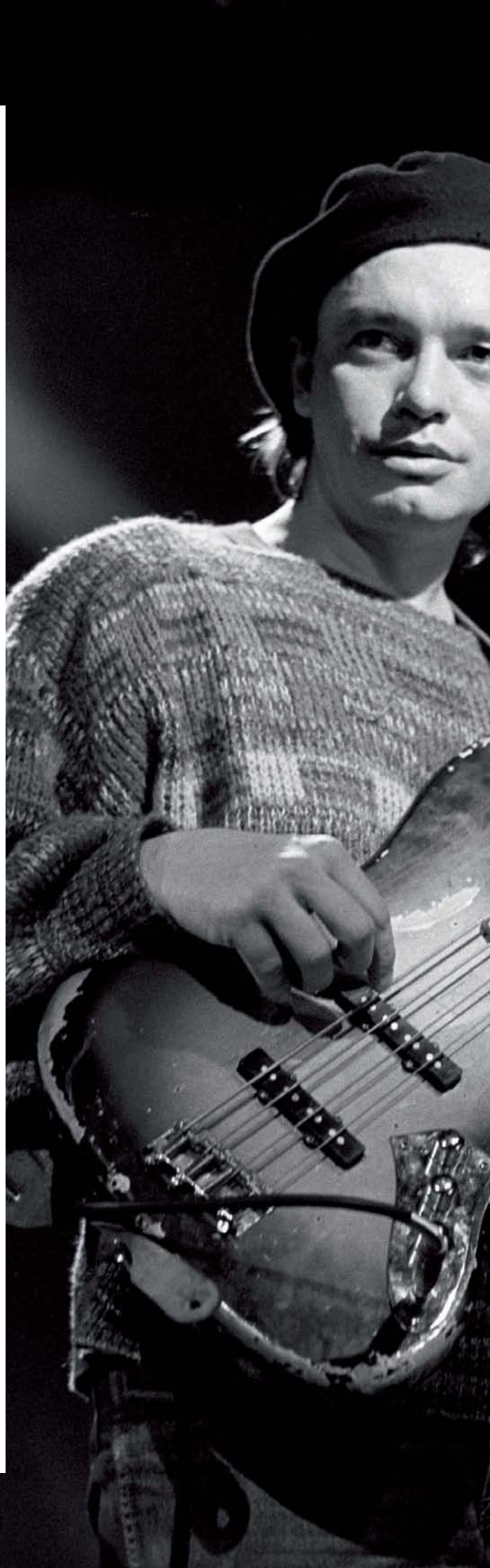
Could you talk theoretically about what you're doing on 'Portrait Of Tracy'? That's an amazing example of the use of harmonics.
Well, the main melody, I guess you would say, is in C. So the first thing I did is, you're holding on to C with your first finger and with your third and your fourth you're getting a G note on the D string, which produces the D, the 9, up top, and on the G strings you're getting the third which gives you the major 7th. And then you come down and get the A on the D string. It's very tight but it's all right there. Everything but the Eb is a natural harmonic, and you get that by pressing on the A string on the B note. If you don't have big hands, you won't get this. You're using your finger like a capo. I never thought about that. I was messing around with 'Portrait Of Tracy' for years, and if I wanted more notes it was just common sense. I said, 'Shit, if I've got an open A string and I hit the harmonic on top at C#, if I hit it down at B, I gotta get one on D#'. It was so simple because that theory has to continue to work. And at the very end I put my finger down and play F#, B, and E and hit my open E, then I've got three notes. I've got high G#, D#, and A# on the bottom, giving you a major 7b5 type of chord. Just stuff like that. That's just right there on the bass, on a standard tuned bass.

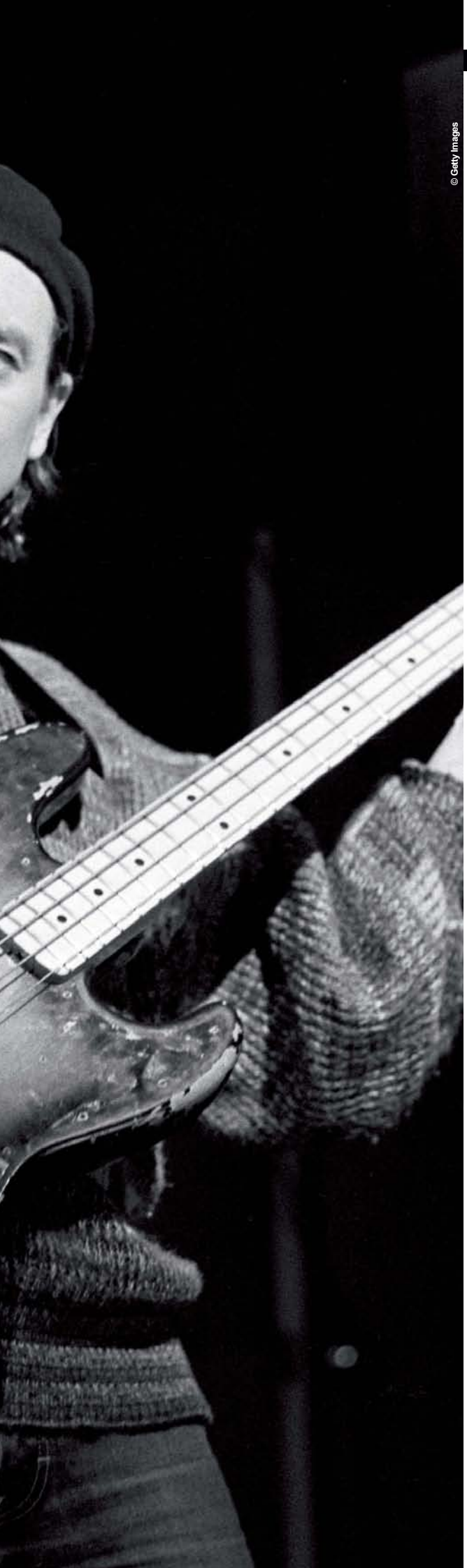
Have you ever worked with different tunings?
A couple times, yeah, I have some original music written like that. I'm saving that stuff, it's really out. I have some really out-sounding stuff at home. But there's enough happening with regular tuning, that's rough enough.

What types of strings do you use?
Rotosounds, round-wound. I used Fender strings when I started, because that's all they were really making at the time. To me, Rotosounds have what no other string has, [which] is pure harmonics, and the closest to playing harmonics in tune. All harmonics are flat on the bass and the higher you play a note, the flatter they get. So when you play something like 'Portrait Of Tracy' on the G string and stuff like that, when I recorded that I actually tuned the G string a little sharp. And the D string. Because most of the bass notes I was playing on the E and A and the top two were nothing but harmonics. I tuned a little sharper and in that way you get closer to the actual intonation you want to hear. On stage I don't have time to do that, therefore I won't always be in tune with harmonic chords. If you've got brand new strings, it comes out pretty close.

When you first began playing, did you use a pick?
No, I used my thumb first: I probably used my thumb for about a month and then went right to my fingers. I never practised my right-hand technique: it just naturally developed. The hardest thing to do, in fact the only practising I did with my right hand, is just getting the strings I'm not playing to shut up.

Were you playing a Fender with all those gigs in Florida?
Yeah, that's the stuff. The one without frets is a '62 and the one with frets is a '60. I just took the frets off the one. Other than that they're stock Fender basses. My fretted bass that I play on stage has three pots in it for each pickup and a

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tone control. Have you ever seen those basses with pro-centric knobs, the real old Fender Jazz basses had them? They just had two knobs with a tone control on the outside of each knob. But I just put on new knobs. I was doing that when I played with Ira Sullivan down in Miami. I have a few other basses I practise with and stuff. But they're all Jazz basses.

Why don't you like Precisions?
They're too muddy, plus they don't have that back pickup you need to get the sound and really dig in.

Does your approach to fretted and fretless bass require different techniques?
Not really. The fretless is just, of course, having to hit the notes in tune, but the technique itself is pretty close to the same thing.

What about the approach to finger vibrato on the two instruments?
On a fretless, it's like legit. You have to play like a cellist, back and forth. You have to roll it. Then on a fretted you have to pull the strings.

Do you play any cello or acoustic bass?
I can play acoustic bass a bit, but I don't like to. I'm a soul man, I like to play R&B and have fun with it. I like the acoustic bass, I love the sound of it and I can play it pretty good actually. But living in Florida, the weather is so bad humidity-wise, I had a good bass once and it just fell apart. Literally fell apart into a million pieces: I woke up and it was in a pile on the floor. The humidity just pulled it apart. At the time I just couldn't afford to buy a really great bass that would stand up to that weather, so being a pragmatic guy I did the best I could. I took my Fender and just kept playing that. When everyone else was saying that wasn't music and you've got to play the big bass and all this bullshit, I said, 'Well, dig this'. And now I can play and everyone else is sort of crying. It was just being pragmatic: I had to work, I had a baby on the way, and all that ego bullshit… I can improvise and I can play new stuff, and I know tradition pretty well, too, so I think those are pretty good ingredients to be called a jazz musician. I ain't hanging on to the past and I ain't putting people down that do that, don't get me wrong. A lot of people aren't capable of doing anything else but holding on to the past, and if that's how they can stay happy and content with themselves, beautiful. More power to you.

What kind of amplifiers are you using?
I use an Acoustic 360, an old amp. One of them is the very first one I bought. I use two of them. I use the Acoustics in the studio and direct. Mostly direct.

What settings on the amp and bass give you your sound?
Bass all the way up, and I only use my back pickup, the bass pickup. I have that sound, that R&B type sound which is real punchy. It hits you and the Acoustic never distorts, it really just comes out. The Acoustic can take anything. And I don't play very loud either: it's about 2½ or 3 on stage. I use the same volume to play with everybody.

You're obviously a purist in your approach to playing and sound. Have you ever experimented with pedals?
No. Last year I started experimenting with something on stage. A couple times, like on records, I've played the bass twice: I've played something and then played it again to get it to sound like two basses. I guess it almost sounds like it's being phased, but it ain't, it's like natural phasing. But then on stage sometimes I want to get that sound, so I have a little digital delay hooked up, where I put echo through [to the] amp and the other is a straight signal. I like to use that on soloing, because it really puts a nice little ambience on it.

When you're soloing, where does your mind go? Are you thinking about scales and modes that you know, or is it purely free-form?
Not really. There are certain things you have to learn all your life and you apply them. But I never think about scales. I think about the chord itself. If I'm in Ab7, I think of Ab and F#, Gb actually, and C. Those are your major tones – and just listen. I think tritone a lot, depending if they're dominant chords, because those are your key notes. That's about it. And then outside of that, just think melodically. ■

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DEMOLITION DAYS

Tony 'Demolition' Dolan looks back at a career on the loud side with Greg Moffitt

Tony 'Demolition' Dolan founded pioneering UK thrash metal outfit Atomkraft back in 1979 and later replaced Conrad 'Cronos' Lant in black metal legends Venom. Weaned on Slade and Sweet during the mid-1970s, Tony later caught the full force of the punk explosion before discovering Motörhead and moving into metal. "After seeing Motörhead I thought 'Holy shit! I've got to get what Lemmy's playing!'" he laughs.

Tony bought his first Rickenbacker bass shortly afterwards and has never looked back. Initially unable to afford or borrow a bass amp, he played through a Marshall JCM800, a move that did much to shape his emerging sound and his first album, Atomkraft's 1985 debut, *Future Warriors*.

"I wrote almost exclusively on the Rickenbacker, so they were bass-structured songs. I played much more rhythmically than just simple bass-lines: I played power chords and was into using all the strings. I had effects on it and attacked it much more like a guitar. The attack from my picking hand is very heavy: I slice into the strings and I'm playing fast. Normally you can sit there quite sedentary, playing on the off notes while everything else is flashing along, but I like to play all the notes. I need something that has a top end that cuts through, that I can rely on for thickness when I'm playing chords and has a nice, deep bottom end. You get that whole breadth from a Rickenbacker. My favourite is my 1971 blonde 4001 stereo."

Future Warriors – particularly the title track – is the perfect place to hear Tony's Rickenbacker in full flight. Although marred by muddy production, his frantic performance is dominant. "I was into Rush, and I ended up taking bits from both Geddy Lee and Lemmy – and ended up with Lemmy's rhythmic sense and Geddy's jazzy, experimental use of the bass. He's hitting stuff everywhere! When we got to *Future Warriors* I wasn't just gonna sit there fumbling away on a single note. Maybe I car-crashed a bit on there, but there was no way I was gonna sit still!"

Tony's first album with Venom was 1989's *Prime Evil*. Joining such an iconic band and replacing such an, ahem, 'idiosyncratic' bassist was never going to be easy. "In the early days, I think Cronos and I had a similar sound," he says. "We'd both been affected by Motörhead. We'd heard the opening of 'Ace Of Spades' and wanted that distortion and wall of sound that as a three-piece allowed you to miss out a second guitar. Cronos took out the frets from the 12th fret upwards so he could have huge great sweeps with effects on, which gave a really ugly, venomous sound. I decided not to do that because that's what makes it his bass playing, so I attacked the songs my way, with my sound, while staying true to them. On *Prime Evil* I kept my bass pretty clean and it was a bit more technical, but the band wanted to tighten it up a bit and move that way."

Tony Dolan (right): Don't spill his pint

> "After seeing Motörhead I thought 'Holy shit! I've got to get what Lemmy's playing!'"

Now recording and touring with ex-Venom guitarist Jeff 'Mantas' Dunn in M:Pire Of Evil, Tony recently added an HK bass to his rack which also includes an Overwater Original and an Ibanez Artist. "The HK is a bit like a BC Rich Zombie," he explains. "It looks really evil and I love it! It's really light, has a thin body like the Rick, with a long neck, a nice fast action and the same response."

Alongside his Gallien-Krueger 700RB-II amp, Tony has added a Hartke 410 Hydrive, 115XL, VX410 and a custom built 8x10 with Eminence LF drivers for a set-up designed to deliver his signature sound with a minimum of fuss. Topping it off with a Boss DD-3 Digital Delay, a Boss CH-1 Stereo Super Chorus and a Marshall JH-1 Jackhammer, he's good to go. In an era when you can spend half your life trying new gear in ever more convoluted combinations, Tony prefers the familiarity and ease of a tried-and-tested rig. As he says, "I wanna get a big fat lead, plug it into a big fat amp, turn everything up to 11 and just play!" ■

SKETCHES of SPAIN

Spanish bassist **Alexis Cuadrado** brings Iberian jazz themes to the low notes. Joe Daly gets his castanets out

A cheap bass, a kid's record player and a DJ machine barely fit for a basement dance party. For a musician, the beginnings don't get much more humble than that. These three rudimentary tools, however, mark the starting point for one of modern music's most colourful and inspiring journeys.

The odyssey began in Barcelona, where a 13-year-old Alexis Cuadrado stumbled across a cheap copy of a Fender P-bass in his elementary school. At the time he was playing drums in a rock cover band, but after noodling on the school's bass, he decided to borrow it for further investigation, ultimately embracing it as his primary instrument. Alexis laughs when he recalls these early days, admitting, "I still have that bass. I have it on permanent loan."

Without a rig, even the mightiest electric bass is of little use, but Alexis worked that out, no problem. "I didn't have an amp," he tells *Bass Guitar Magazine*, "and I made a cable with a solder that my neighbour lent me, which I would plug into my turntable. I would go around the neighborhood with the bass – without a cover – turntable and speaker, to rehearsals. Then I upgraded to a 10-watt amp and I had this DJ mixer, and we would all go through the mixer into the amp. But it was so much fun. It was awesome."

Although the seeds of Alexis's musical development were sown in the well-trodden pastures of rock covers, he soon gravitated towards the less traditional fringes of jazz fusion, finding inspiration in three of the era's greatest bass-men. "One was Carles Benavent," says Alexis, "who is a bass player from Barcelona and played with Paco Lucia for a long time. Another major inspiration when I was 16 or 17 was Jaco Pastorius. There was a crazy guy in my neighbourhood who lent me all the Jaco records at once, and that whole summer I listened only to those. That completely changed my life. Finally, there was Darryl Jones on that Miles Davis record, *Decoy*. When I heard that, I was like, 'I wanna do that'. It was the whole slapping thing. There was a lot of tasteless slapping in the 80s, but Darryl used it tastefully. Those were my three major influences."

To this day, as a highly-esteemed bass instructor himself, Alexis insists on exposing students to this triumvirate of rhythmic mastery. "Especially Jaco," he says. "He's just amazing. I've seen that video, *Modern Electric Bass*, hundreds of times. I ask my students now, 'Have you seen this? No? Come on, man...' Everything on how to play the bass is there: the hand position and how relaxed it is, the sound, the attitude, the pulse... I love Jaco."

Nearly three decades later, Alexis now resides in New York City as one of the jazz community's most sought-after sidemen. He earned his master's degree in Jazz Performance And Composition (graduating with honours) at the Aaron Copland School of Music; he holds a faculty position at the New School For Jazz And Contemporary Music in New York City; and he co-founded the Brooklyn Jazz Underground.

In New York's contemporary music community, advanced degrees and lengthy studio credits are not all that uncommon: nor is talent, for that matter. What separates the legends from other players is that they tend to create music that pushes through boundaries once thought immovable, and this is where Alexis has hijacked the attention of his contemporaries – by using his bass and his considerable talents to conceive an electrifying new genre of music.

Although he grew up in Spain, like most teenagers turning on to music for the first time, Alexis initially followed The Beatles more than the native acts of his homeland. A great deal of time passed before these attitudes softened, and it was only a few years ago that he turned his attention back to Spain for an intensive immersion into Spanish flamenco, where Alexis discovered that he could use his bass to build a rhythmic bridge between that centuries-old tradition and contemporary jazz compositions.

The fruits of his efforts were both sweet and abundant. In 2011, he released *Noneto Ibérico*, a nine-movement piece performed by nine musicians that reconstructed the elements of flamenco within the framework of modern jazz. "That project," says Alexis, "was the end result of five years of studying flamenco music. I love flamenco music but I never grew up with it and I didn't really know how it works, so I wanted to crack that code." Through a steroidal program of listening, studying, transcribing and playing flamenco, Alexis not only mastered the style on his bass, but he received a Chamber Music America grant to write a flamenco-jazz composition for a nine-piece band. *Noneto Ibérico* is the result, a uniquely-textured and subtly-engaging melodic journey that ignited the passions and imaginations of jazz and flamenco enthusiasts across the globe.

While some bassist-composers lose sight of their primary instrument as they cast their focus more on theory and arrangement, Alexis continues to compose on both electric and double bass. "I've definitely written a lot of stuff on the bass. I originally did a project with a vocalist called Claudia Acuña, and

"While some bassist-composers lose sight of their primary instrument as they cast their focus more on theory and arrangement, Alexis continues to compose on both electric and double bass"

one of the tunes I wrote entirely on the electric bass. I wrote the harmony first, just by playing the chords on the bass – roots, thirds and sevenths – it was a waltz, Bill Evans-type of tune. I use that technique with my students when I'm teaching electric bass: just play the root note on the third or fourth string and the third or the seventh on the first and second string, like Jaco does. I didn't invent it. I wrote the entire chord progression that way, and I recorded it and played the melody on the bass as well."

For his latest project, *Jazz Miniatures For Double Quartet*, Alexis received a Jazz Gallery Residency Commission to further his exploration of jazz and flamenco, this time incorporating the strings of new chamber music into his new genre. Alexis explains, "This year their series was called *Leading From The Bass*, and they commissioned four bassist-composers, and I was one of them. I've wanted to write something for a string quartet for some time, and I thought it would be a good idea to do the string quartet, plus a free-ish jazz quartet, so it was two horns, bass and percussion. The whole thing had kind of a chamber flavour. I wrote pieces that aren't related to each other, almost inspired by The Beatles' *White album*. I spent two months listening to string quartets and taking notes, and then I started writing my music. It was really cool."

While Alexis has expanded the complexity of his compositions, he remains grounded in the fundamentals, and nothing exemplifies his dedication to the bass like his passion for Western African music. "It's not virtuosic, it's just about playing those bass lines and really meaning them and really owning them. I would listen to a bunch of records of that kind of stuff and there's this instrument that has three strings and they're tuned in fifths. I would spend 15 or 20 minutes at a time just playing those three notes with a metronome and just trying to feel that pulse."

Bringing the right attitude and ear to the bass is, to his thinking, the clear path to mastery of the instrument. "Be honest with what you're playing. Don't try to do something just because it's really cool. Also, transcribe a lot, listen to the masters and absorb the vocabulary by imitating first, and then by transforming it into your own language. You have to know how to sing a solo first, then write it down and see if you can play it."

Unsurprisingly, the next year holds even more interesting opportunities. Alexis will continue teaching at the school for Jazz And Contemporary Music, and he then begins work on a new album with Claudia Acuña and Miguel Zenon. "I'm excited about what I'm doing," says Alexis as he reflects on his recent works – and with a full plate ahead, his excitement has no reason to ebb. ■

Info: www.myspace.com/alexiscuadrado

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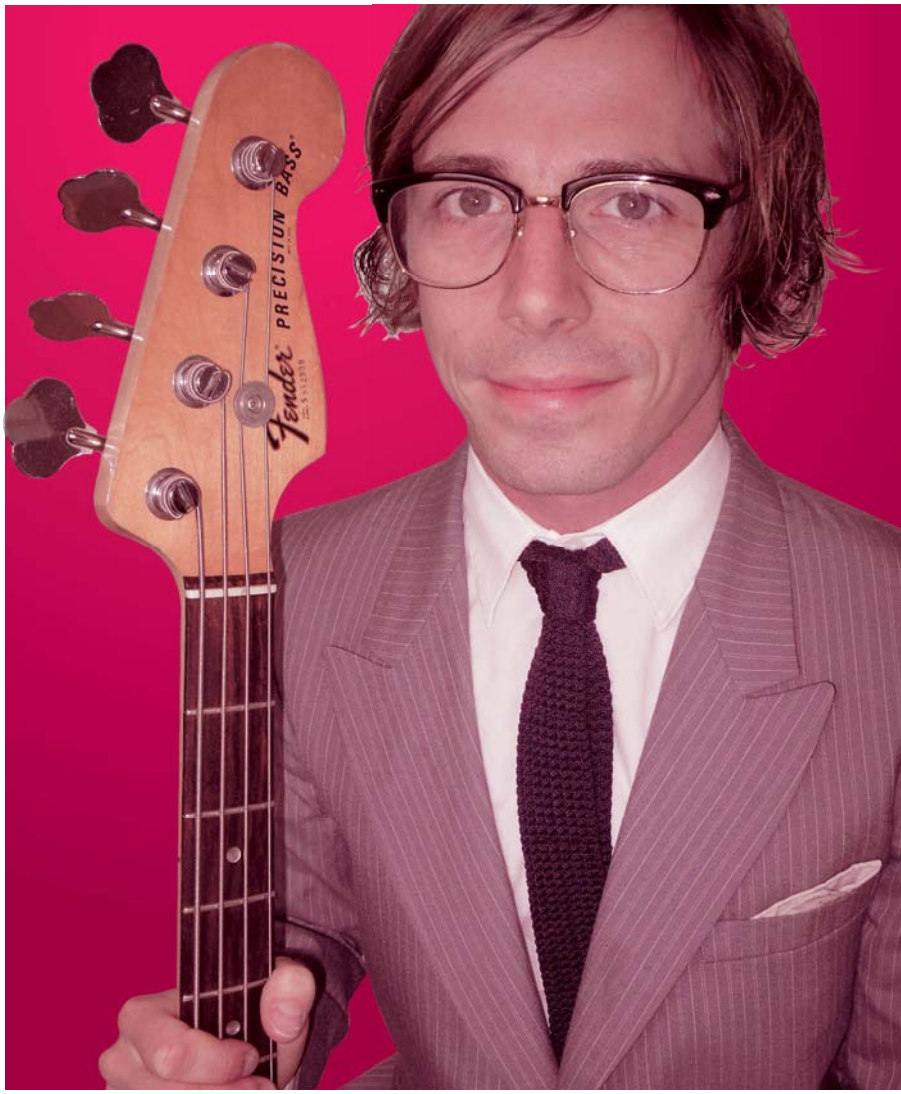
UNDER PRESSURE

Ben Cooper meets bassist **Oliver McKiernan**, a man who finds himself performing in the court of rock royalty



If you're talking legendary bass players, they really don't come much bigger than Sir Paul McCartney. Whatever you might think of his post-Beatles output, one constantly brilliant part of Macca's canon is his four-string skill. Now imagine having one half of the greatest songwriting duo of all time sitting 10 feet away from you as you play bass for his son. That's what Oliver McKiernan, sideman for James McCartney, and a slew of other top names, has to contend with.

"I'll happily admit to feeling pressured by Paul McCartney standing in front of the stage, but I don't think letting yourself be intimidated brings good results," he says. "You just have to channel the adrenaline in a positive way." It's that kind of attitude that has led Oli to play bass for Tony Christie, Mel B and Pete Molinari amongst others.

He's come a long way since making his musical debut on bugle in a marching band, which involved dressing up and playing around his home town – something we promised Oli we'd keep under wraps, but felt it wasn't in the spirit of transparent journalism to do so. McKiernan's parents bought him a guitar after showing early musical promise, but he ended up playing bass, in the fine tradition of many guitarists, Paul McCartney included. "Back then you were required to take up a secondary instrument if you didn't already have one. Keyboards didn't appeal, I couldn't sing for toffee and some friends of mine already had drum kits, so I chose the bass by process of elimination, really."

Following college, Oli landed a gig as the bass player in an English covers band called Blah Blah, who earned a crust playing the bars and clubs along the glitzy French Riviera in Monaco, Cannes and Nice. During one crazy year he cut his teeth as a gigging musician. "I got to meet loads of far-out people, from billionaire bankers to Hollywood film directors, famous musicians and mobsters," he recalls. "By the time I was 21, I'd done 250 gigs up and down the coast. It felt like one big party all the way."

Recognising that all he was really doing was rote-learning lines from albums, without any real foundation in the musical theory behind it, and craving something more creative than covers work, Oli headed to London and studied at the Guitar Institute. However, midway through the four-year course he quit and started afresh as a working bassist in London. The early years were pretty lean, he recalls. "It took me a while to get a foothold in London, a lot longer than I had anticipated, and for many years I had to subsidise my playing with part-time work in a guitar shop. That was no bad thing, though. I met a lot of great people and got some good gigs through working there."

As Oli built up a reputation on the London scene, word came about a gig with James McCartney. While he gunned for the bass slot, a close friend was vying for the drummer's throne, and after a gruelling series of auditions they both got the gig. A lot of it was down to their mutual chemistry, he believes. "A key element of any band is balancing the right personalities and I think, for that band, we happened to have what James and the other people hiring us were looking for."

All this work with other musicians takes up a lot of Oli's time. After the US tour with McCartney, he's undertaking a residency with Pete Molinari, then festival slots with James again. Among all this, he manages to work on remixes with artists, something he finds extremely rewarding. "The originator of the music has entrusted you with their entire work. It's very humbling, and the possibilities with current software are mind-blowing," he tells us. But what about a solo album or his own band? It's on the cards, but finding the time, and the backing for it, is the key. "I've got tons of material together, now I just need to find the time to record it all properly, get a producer, a booker, label support and all that," he reveals. "Playing with other musicians is great, but it means my own stuff takes a back seat sometimes. Having said that, I'm really happy with what I'm doing now." Keep your eyes on Oli, we reckon. There's no knowing what he'll do next. ■

For more information visit www.olivermckiernan.com

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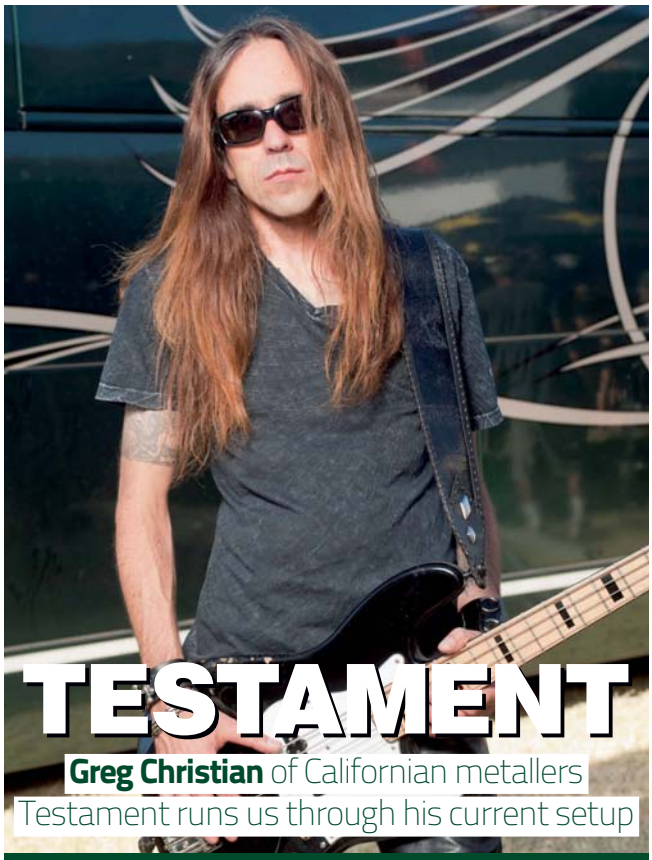

TESTAMENT

Greg Christian of Californian metallers Testament runs us through his current setup

"I am currently using a pair of Fender Jazz basses as my main instruments and a Peavy Zodiac for the C-sharp tuning: our main tuning is D sharp. The Jazz basses are Geddy Lee signatures and for lack of a better way to put it, they simply work. I used active electronics for years, thinking that was the only way to get proper bass tone, and while the Bartolini and the later Peavey active electronics have great sound and a multitude of tones, active basses are also more of a pain in the ass! You have to worry about batteries, you usually get more ground and/or RF noise, and you have to watch not to push the low end too much or it'll just be mush in the mix. And seriously, I have a thousand watt amp, do I really need a battery-powered preamp in my bass? Passive is easy and works. The Jazz basses and the Peavey sound great, no matter what I plug them into. My effects set-up currently consists of, well, most obviously and upfront, a Jim Dunlop bass Crybaby. I love that wah. It's lots of fun. In the effects loop of my amp head, I run a Tech-21 Sansamp RBI. I use it to shape the EQ and add gain and presence, and it works great. On the front end, my secret weapons are the Aphex pedals. These two pedals sorted my tone out unbelievably. Well, with the help of James Lomenzo: he came out to a soundcheck of ours in LA last year and showed me how to set them. Amazing. The Aphex Punch Factory and the Aphex Xciter really make the bass sing. Seriously. My main amp now is an Ampeg SVT Pro 5, the discontinued model. It's a great sounding amp. It's a little more complicated to use than most SVTs because it has a second (overdrive) channel instead of the usual numbered midrange knob, but once I figured it out, I can get a smoking tone out of it. I also use a pair of Peavey Tour 700 heads. I run all the effects exactly the same way with either head, and truth be told, running them that way, they sound damn near identical. For all the last few full European tours, I've been using all Peavey amps. I've been using the Ampeg in the States, both with Peavey 8x10 cabs." ■

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FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

Bob Battersby meets veteran bassist **Barry Devlin** of Irish folk-rock troubadours Horslips

Picture the scene. It's 9 February 1971 at the International Chinese restaurant on Wicklow Street, Dublin. Three nights away from their first appearance on the RTE television show *Fonn*, a new band – formed from a fake band put together by a Dublin design agency for a Harp lager commercial – still hadn't got a name. The guy who did the graphics for the show was hassling them for something to put on the credits, so they started trying to come up with a name.

Someone says, "Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse?"

"That's a bit pretentious."

"It's ironic, there are five of us."

Someone else says, "Four Poxmen Of The Horslypse, more like."

After the laughter had subsided, they reckoned that the graphics guy wouldn't go for 'Poxmen' – and so a legend was born.

One of that group of monosodium glutamate and prawn cracker-fuelled musicians was Barry Devlin, a dropout apprentice priest, Latin graduate and advertising copywriter who, after a short spell on rhythm guitar, switched to bass just in time for the band to take Ireland by storm.

Horslips evolved at around the same time as other Irish folk fusion groups such as Planxty and the Bothy Band, and they were to be an influence on musicians as diverse as U2 and The Pogues. At the start, Horslips thought of themselves as a prog rock band, due to their fusion of Irish traditional music and rock. Having flirted with a number of styles on their first album, *Happy To Meet, Sorry To Part* (1972), by the time they released *The Tain* (1973), an epic concept album based on a traditional Irish folk tale, they had become the embodiment of Celtic rock. Even their last, and considerably more pop-orientated, studio album, *Short Stories/Tall Tales* (1979), smuggled various traditional tunes into the mix. By then, however, their rock influences had moved away from King Crimson, and begun to approach Bruce Springsteen and Little Feat.

On 12 October 1980 Horslips played their last gig, at the Ulster Hall, and slipped quietly into the land of legend to carve out new careers for themselves.

However, in 2004, a group of enthusiasts toured an exhibition about Horslips around Ireland, reactivating interest in the band. A studio album of reworked classics, *Roll Back* (2004), was subsequently produced and the band reformed sporadically for TV specials and the odd live show. This slow but steady return of the 'dancehall sweethearts' culminated in a sell-out gig at Dublin's O2 in 2009 (now available on DVD) and some select festival appearances in 2011, including Glasgow's Celtic Connections, the London Feis and Fairport's Cropredy Convention. Encouraged by the response, Horslips are planning a number of European festival appearances in 2012.

Like many bass players who start on guitar, Barry's first bass was a short-scale, Mustang-style, red Höfner bought from Walton's in Dublin. As the band took off he switched to a Gibson EB0, but found it uncomfortable to wear and play. His next bass, and one he has returned to, was a Dan Armstrong Plexiglas model. With its short scale and smooth,

Teflon-like feel to the neck, it was the bass he used on the band's first album *Happy To Meet…*, but, feeling that a long-scale bass would have more tone and resonance for live performance, he traded in the Dan Armstrong at Crowley's of Cork for the 1973 Fender Jazz that he still plays: "The Jazz is a legendary bass, and those old Fenders really make a good noise."

In late 1973 he commissioned a shamrock-shaped bass from renowned bass and guitar builder John Birch, based on a design by Horslips' fiddle and mandolin player, Charles O'Connor. Around 1976 the John Birch humbuckers were switched for a couple of Fender Jazz pickups in an attempt to improve the tone but, as the bass sounded exactly the same as it had before, it was relegated to encore duty.

In relation to his playing style, which generally involves picking very close to the bridge, Devlin said, "I have shaky hands, always have, so I need somewhere to rest my thumb to get accuracy and uniformity of attack. Part of why I like the Dan Armstrong bass is the position of the thumb rest. I also use a really flexible pick, but then use the hard edge of it for attack."

Similarly, he has always favoured Ampeg tube amps, as they tend to handle his playing style better than more sterile solid-state heads. "There wasn't that much ornamentation in my playing anyway," he says, referring to the Horslips bass-lines, "but I've taken even more of it out, you know. Still, listen to Jimmy Cliff's bass player, he makes it sound like I'm playing too much!"

The majority of Horslips' material was a collaborative effort, perhaps the most memorable being the anthemic 'Dearg Doom', a tune that introduced a whole new audience to the band when the guitar intro was used on U2 drummer Larry Mullen, Jr's theme song for Ireland's 1990 World Cup campaign. Barry wrote a number of songs, including 'Ferdia's Song' on *Tain* and the 'The Man Who Built America' from the album of the same name. Along the way he also created some memorable bass lines. 'Dearg Doom' and 'Trouble With A Capital T' are classic examples of his sparse but completely complementary contribution to collaborative arrangements. He sings a bit as well, often taking the lead vocal duties.

Barry is fairly self-effacing for a man who created the template for Celtic rock bass and sold his touring rig to Adam Clayton – who he first met while cutting demos for a very young U2. He is also very funny; the late Dermot Morgan (aka Father Ted) was a friend, and he has written a number of comedy scripts.

I spoke to Barry at the Cropredy Festival, where Horslips shared a bill with Fairport Convention for the first time since 1971. I asked him what it was like being back on the road after 30 years. "We're absolutely delighted with what's happened," he said. "One of the things about bands that stop, is that people always speak well of the dead! So, over the 30 years that we were safely in the old mausoleum, our critical reputation steadily increased. People were thinking, 'Ah yes, sure they weren't they great, but didn't they do the nation some service?' But then, we woke up and began wandering around the country zombie-like, with the winding sheet hanging off us. We were wondering what the response would be. But we've been lucky – people have liked what we do."

Talking of bass players, Barry tipped his hat to the great, and in many ways underrated, Glenn Cornick, who created the warm, melodic basslines in the early Jethro Tull. "He's a most melodic player, he does all those underdrops," he said. "I also liked David Hayes, Van Morrison's bass player. I really admire McCartney, and James Jamerson driving those Motown songs along, as well as Duck Dunn's riffs at Stax. I loved Little Feat's Kenny Gradney, and the Blockheads' Norman Watt-Roy is great."

Overall, Devlin is drawn to players who have the chops but don't feel the need to throw them in your face. "My real heroes are the men who can play every note on the page… but don't!" ■

www.horslips.ie

GEAR

Bass Barry currently plays an Ampeg Dan Armstrong Plexiglas reissue, loaned to him by guitar collector Paddy Goodwin. He still has the Fender 1973 Jazz that featured on most of Horslips' albums and the famous John Birch custom-made Shamrock bass.

Amps The current live backline is usually an Ampeg VR or SVT 300W tube head paired with an Ampeg SVT 810 cabinet. For practice, he uses a Roland Cube.

Strings The short-scale Dan Armstrong is strung with fairly light D'Addario EXL220S .40 to .95 strings, customised with a heavier .50 G string from a D'Addario EXL160S set.

Celtic Legends

Even before the original demise of Horslips in 1980, Barry had carved out a career for himself as a screenwriter, producer and director. In 1979, Paul McGuinness asked him to make a few demos with a bunch of teenagers who were to become U2. Barry tells a tale of how Larry Mullen's dad turned up one night to collect him, as Larry had school in the morning. "But I haven't finished with Larry's bass drum yet," to which Mr Mullen, Sr said, very quietly, "Ah, yes you have…" Barry subsequently worked as U2's cinematographer of choice from 1984 to 1992. He also directed *Outside It's America*, the documentary about the Joshua Tree tour, a couple of TV specials and a raft of making-of videos. In addition, he wrote several episodes of *The Darling Buds Of May* and *Ballykissangel*, a number of film screenplays and the radio detective series *Bald*. In 2009 he made *A Kiss For Jed Wood*, about an Irish reality show winner who goes to New York for the eponymous kiss. He is currently working on *The Virgin Of Las Vegas*, which is in production, and Carefree, which is, to use the jargon, 'in development'. Add to that his master's degree in English from University College Dublin, and the fact that his brother-in-law is the poet Seamus Heaney, you can see that putting Horslips back on the road is a labour of love, perhaps tinted with a bit of nostalgia, for this Renaissance man.

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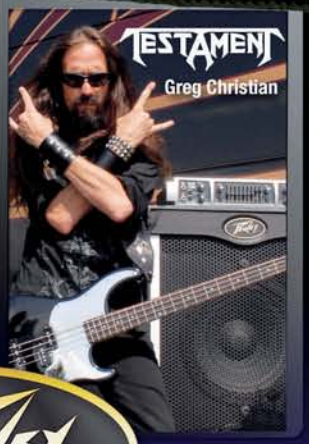

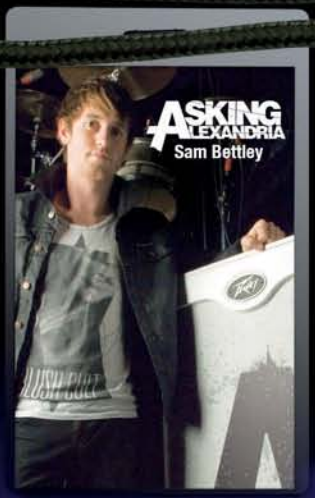

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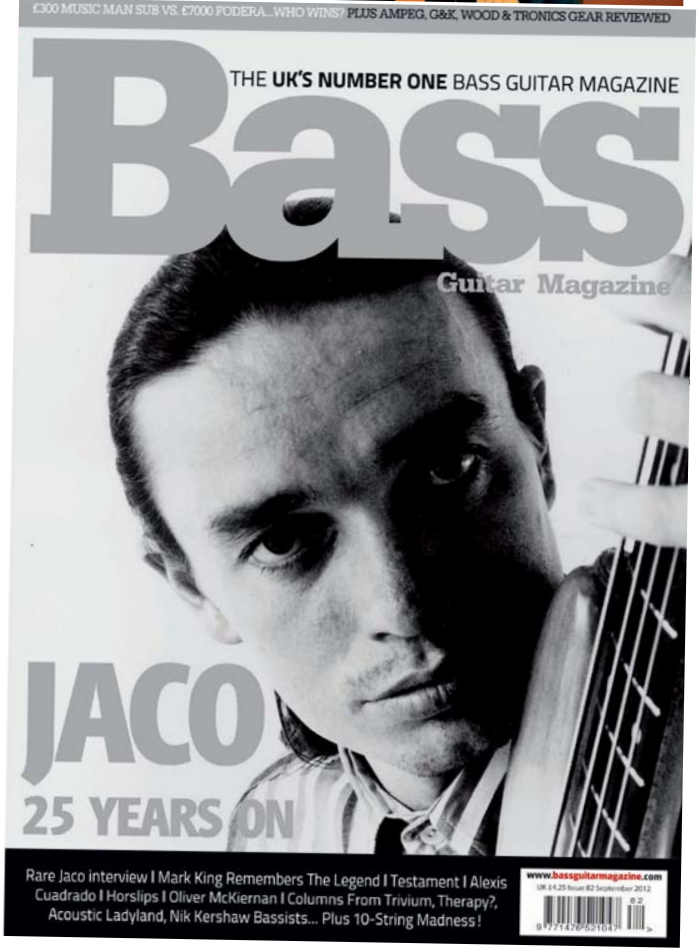
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MUSIC MAN STERLING SUB RAY4-WS

A Music Man for the price of a Flymo? Joel McIver enters the SUB level...

It's not easy to find any bassist who doesn't like a Music Man. There's just something about these elegant, economically-designed, a-lot-like-a-Fender-but-tidied-up-a-bit instruments that resonates with more or less any style of playing. Music Men (Mans?) are renowned for their tone range, shred-friendly necks and eminent slappability, of course, but you don't have to be a jazz-funk maestro to make the most of them. Along with a few other iconic basses, they're the closest we have to a bass for everyone.

But this versatility has always come at a price, and a high one at that. These days you're looking at the thick end of 1500 quid for a top-spec model, a pricetag not unadjacent to £1000 for a merely decent MM and then on downwards depending on the number of dings and scratches you're prepared to put up with. The 'Sterling By Music Man' range went some way to placing a Music Man in the hands of those of average income, releasing basses priced at merely a few hundred quid, and a couple of years ago the Sterling brand's SUB line went even further, giving us an intrument which looks and sounds like the real thing for a shade over £300. Here's a 2012 model, dressed in a rather splendid walnut finish. Let's have at it!

Build Quality

A quick heads-up. At this price point, a review of any musical instrument is necessarily determined by the quality of the review model that is sent to the reviewer. The SUB we were sent is beautifully set up and has obviously been handled with great care. Don't expect the same treatment from every local guitar emporium out there, though: down at the low end of the low end, so to speak, guitars sometimes get chucked from buyer to buyer and store to store with all the sensitivity of a baggage handler on speed. So caveat emptor: our SUB is in great condition, but yours may not be.

If you're anything like us, you'll tend to give any new bass a quick unamplified play as it comes out of the box, just to check the action, the neck and the newness (or otherwise) of the strings. It's only after this that you'll plug in and give it a proper listen. Never underestimate the importance of that first, unplugged few seconds, grasshopper: your fingers will tell you a huge amount about the instrument you're holding, even when it isn't making any sound other than a distant thud. Fret buzz is more audible, body/head balance is more evident when you're not listening to the plugged-in signal, and the action of

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Strings & Things
www.stringsandthings.co.uk
strings@stringsandthings.co.uk

the controls – smooth, detented or just sticky – is easier to read when they're not actually modifying the sounds.

In our SUB's case, all these elements came up trumps with a few seconds of fingerstyle after it came out of its case. You don't need to have a fully-fledged, top-of-the-line Music Man next to you for comparison to tell you that you're not playing a £1500 bass: only a novice would make that mistake. The SUB simply doesn't play like that. The neck is fast, but not insanely so; the fret ends are cleanly finished, but still detectable; the hardware is adequate, but not world-class. This last point applies in particular to the tuners and the bridge, which work perfectly well, but lack the weight and millimetric response of the upmarket versions. The body itself is comfortably weighted, though, and the neck finish is clean: there's none of the dreaded, finger-dragging stickiness that often spoils low-budget basses by making your hands feel like you're playing through treacle.

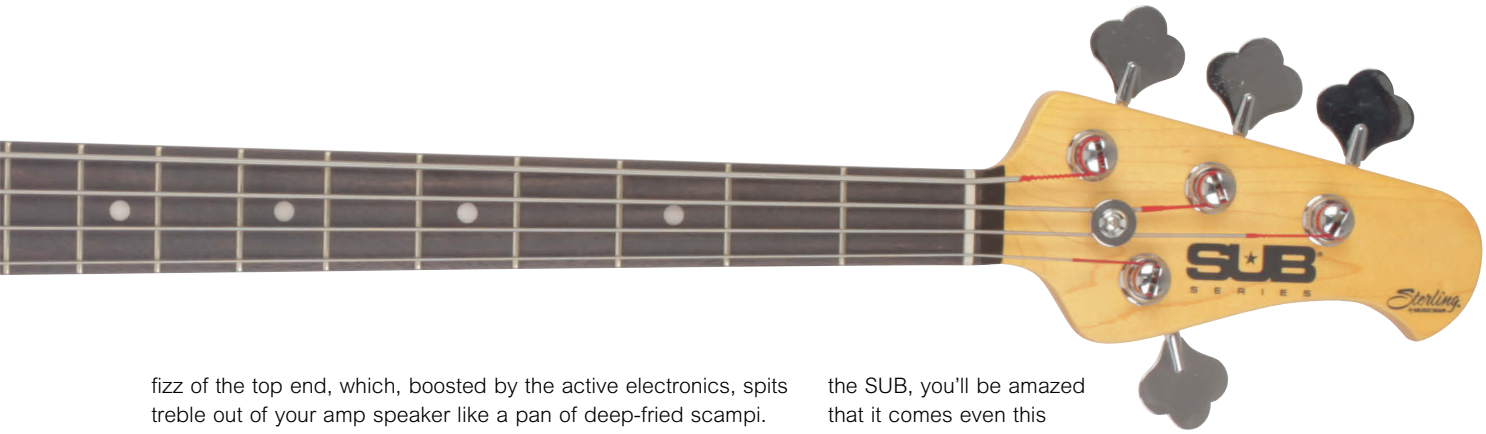
> "We've always been big fans of a two-control EQ here at BGM: life is too short for a dedicated mids pot, if you ask us"

You might expect corners to have been cut in lesser areas, such as the control pots, the pickup mounts, the neck join or the battery compartment. In fact, all these are solid and feel reliable: Ernie Ball has always explained that the necessary savings have come from the body wood and the hardware rather than the electronics or the neck, which makes a lot of sense to us.

Playability And Sounds

Rather than comparing the SUB to a full-spec Music Man (a practice not unlike saying 'this Ford Mondeo is all right, but it's not as fast as a Porsche'), let's examine it on its own merits. With a bit of judicious tweaking of the bridge-saddle heights and perhaps a minute spent on the truss rod, you'll be left with a very playable bass. It's not perfect: there's a little bit of buzz here and there, and the sustain is hardly state-of-the art, but we're not complaining, and we don't think you will either.

Where the SUB does excel is in its tone. We've always been big fans of a two-control EQ here at *BGM*: life is too short for a dedicated mids pot, if you ask us. That said, Music Man users expect a usable range of tones whatever the budget, and the SUB doesn't disappoint. Slappers will particularly enjoy the zippy



fizz of the top end, which, boosted by the active electronics, spits treble out of your amp speaker like a pan of deep-fried scampi. Fans of the low end, meanwhile, will enjoy the big bass notes, but will need a rig of serious dimensions for that all-out, ear-bleeding reggae sound: the SUB is definitely happier up top than down below. Meanwhile, if that Seinfeld high-mid zone is where you're headed, this bass will serve you as well as any other £300 bass, which is to say it will do it adequately enough.

If all this sounds a bit blasé, believe us, we don't mean to sound that way: as soon as you remember how much you paid for the SUB, you'll be amazed that it comes even this close to its elder siblings' considerable standards.

Conclusions

This is a budget bass guitar, with all that the term implies: you won't find luxurious woods or hand-wired electronics in your SUB. At the same time, however, it represents a deliberate attempt by a manufacturer at the very top of its game to defeat the paradigm and deliver a genuinely playable, usable instrument at a very reasonable cost. In this, Ernie Ball has succeeded. The SUB is a perfectly respectable instrument for a beginner, as a backup for a semi-pro or full-blown professional and – perhaps most significantly – for anyone who simply doesn't have the cash for the state-of-the-art Music Man. Hats off to Ernie. ■

Technical Specification

Price £319.99
Colour Walnut satin
Body Solid hardwood
Neck Maple
Neck Join Six bolt
Nut Width 38mm
Fingerboard Rosewood
Scale Length 34"
Frets 21 medium jumbo
Tuners Standard Music Man
Bridge Standard Music Man
Pickups Single humbucker
Hardware Gold
Controls Volume, bass, treble

What We Think

Plus Amazing performance for the price
Minus Lacks the slinky playability of its pricier siblings
Overall One of the finest low-budget basses ever

BGM Rating Out Of Five

Build Quality ★★★½☆
Sound Quality ★★★★☆
Value For Money ★★★★★

WOOD & TRONICS QUINTESSENCE CHRONOS 5 STRING BASS

Mike Brooks casts a beady eye over this retro-coloured Italian upstart

The team at Wood & Tronics have been producing some very tasty bass models of late, without confining themselves by conforming to the most popular styles. The Quintessence range consists of affordable, bolt-on versions of their through-neck custom basses, though these instruments are still handcrafted and finished in the W&T workshop in northern Italy. Plenty of players prefer the tonal characteristics that a bolt-on neck has to offer, so just what does this bass have to say for itself?

Build Quality

The alder body has an interesting style and shape, with a slightly offset lower bout not unlike a Jazz bass. However, the unique single-cut top horn and the top contour – which looks as if a chunk of timber has been knocked out – give it a look all of its own. The rounded subtle curves work from a visual perspective, and although the body isn't especially deep, the mix of sharp and smooth edges and contours makes it comfortable nonetheless. The retro burst gloss-finish makes a nice change, and the single-ply cream coloured scratchplate just adds to the understated but satisfying visuals. It's a shame that the plate screws don't sit flat with the plate surface, so if your right hand likes to move about a bit when playing, take it easy. You may find you have scraped fingers and knuckles in no time.

Despite an 18mm string spacing at the bridge, the satin finished neck has a tighter string spacing at the nut. Coupled with a highly playable neck profile, that slightly broadens as you approach the body, this makes for a very

comfortable five-string bass. Although there is some headstock bias, the instrument balances perfectly once placed on a strap. Where some five-string necks can seem like they are exerting pressure on your fretting hand, W&T should be commended for making a neck that places no excess strain on the wrist or fretting fingers. The thin, medium-sized frets help matters further by reducing resistance when moving across the strings. Due to the single-cut construction, the neck attaches to the body around the 14th fret, but access to the upper frets is unhindered due to the extensive cutaway around the lower horn. There is also some additional sculpting and bevelling around the neck joint, which means there is less timber at the point of attachment.

The kingwood fingerboard is quite bright, which helps to show off its gorgeous grain. Satinwood position markers, a dark yellowy brown in colour, have been used to resemble vintage clay-style markers, which are totally in-keeping with the design brief of this bass. The large, paddle-like headstock comes fitted with chrome Hipshot Ultralite machine heads in a three-over-two arrangement, while the truss-rod plate even matches. The W&T emblem is emblazoned at the top of the headstock. An ebony pickup cover, chrome Hipshot Vintage-style bridge, antique gold saddles and a brass nut complement the overall look.

The five black knobs that control the John East SB-02 circuitry are knurled and centre-detented with white position spot markers. Along with bass, middle and treble controls, they offer volume and pickup pan (stacked), and a passive tone control with additional push/pull operation for active/passive selection. The plastic control cavity plate is held in place magnetically, and although it's well shielded, it's a little messy in terms of layout, with the cabling only tied back to a small degree.

Playability And Sounds

Any good instrument worth its salt will make you want to keep returning to it, and the Chronos certainly does that. Being comfortable to wear and easy to adapt to are definite plus points, but delivering in the sound stakes is equally important. Before plugging in, the bass gave the impression that the played-in strings probably weren't doing it any favours, and if there was a bright exciting tone waiting to be discovered, the strings were doing their best to hide it. We needn't have worried, though, as plugging the bass in opened up a fine selection of tones.

Any bass equipped with a John East circuit has a relative advantage, as the East circuits give the player a wide selection of tone-shaping options to tinker with. In use, the tone could never be described as excessive or over the top, but there is plenty of power and definition on tap, while the EQ gives the player the ability to add more. Set flat there was an even response across all five strings, and the low B put in a solid

Contact Details

Bass Gear Ltd.
01189 706925
info@bassgear.co.uk
www.bassgear.co.uk

Technical Specification

Price £2099
Colour Retro burst, gloss finish
Body Alder
Neck Three-piece maple
Fingerboard Kingwood
Pickups 2 x Kent Armstrong J-style split coils
Electronics John East SB-02, active and passive
Controls Volume/blend (stacked), passive tone (push/pull for active/passive selection), treble, middle, bass
Tuners Hipshot Ultralite
Bridge Hipshot vintage style
Made In Italy
Nut Width 45mm
Neck Join bolt-on, five screw attachment
Scale Length 34" (864mm)
Frets 24
Weight 3.9kg
Case/Gig Bag Included Gig Bag
Left Hand Model Available Yes

What We Think

Plus A visually pleasing, tonally flexible bass that is highly playable and draws the player back time and again

Minus Lacks the wow factor that a bass at this price needs, and may face some stiff competition in this price bracket

Overall A reliable performer that has a lot going for it

BGM Rating Out Of Five

Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Value For Money	✪✪✪✪✪

display, offering plenty of tone and character. Played fingerstyle, the low end and mid levels sounded smooth and articulate – proof of the 'transparent' tone that W&T claim. Players of a percussive persuasion will enjoy this bass, as the bolt-on construction gives it an extra bounce in terms of string response and resonance, and it lacks nothing in the sustain department.

Panning between the pickups showed a marked difference in the overall signal, which is to be expected – but again, neither pickup was excessive in its tonal delivery. The passive tone control was particularly useful in adding or removing any harshness from the response of each string, especially when digging in to see how the bass responded to increased attack. Switching to passive mode highlighted a drop in overall output, but boosting the volume provided a useful, uncoloured tone that, in many situations, might be more suitable to your requirements. Some active circuits when switched to passive mode can sound plain and thin, but this certainly isn't the case with the Chronos.

Conclusion

W&T haven't gone down the route of producing a bolt-on alternative in order to simply cash in. It's simply a cheaper option, and in our view it's no worse for it. The body shape, neck profile and all round ergonomics work to the player's benefit, while the marriage of Kent Armstrong pickups and the East circuit is excellent. However, we kept thinking that the pickups and circuitry, if attached to a £1000 bass, might well give the same performance – and save you £1100 in the process. However, this is a handmade instrument, and handmade instruments always carry a higher price tag. The choice is yours. ■

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FODERA MONARCH DELUXE

Kevin Sanders bows before this regal instrument. But at seven grand, is it a true king or merely a jester?

If you visit Oxford's Ashmolean Museum you'll see a rare and beautiful instrument: the Stradivarius violin known as the 'Messiah'. It earned this name because, after being made, the hype and excitement that surrounded it meant that although lots of musicians knew about it, virtually none had ever seen it, much less played it. You might say that Fodera basses are a bit like this – some of the most desirable basses in the world that only a privileged few will ever own or play. Can it possibly live up to expectations?

Build Quality

The Monarch was the first model made by New York luthier Vinnie Fodera in 1983. Just beforehand, he and pro bass player Joey Lauricella started the business and set about making the best basses they could. One of their first customers was Victor Wooten, who was so taken with the Monarch that he's used a version of it as his first-choice bass pretty much ever since.

Before we get down to specifics, here's a generalisation about the Fodera's woods and build quality: they're flawless. At least, if there are any points that could be objectively criticised, I can't find them. And I've looked. Very, very closely.

The body is Brazilian mahogany, faced with flamed eucalyptus. Whatever the tonal properties of this front, it looks stunning: similar in colour and appearance to aged tiger-stripe maple, but with a distinct 'shake' to the stripes. Sandwiched between these body timbers is a thin veneer of what looks like ebony.

Technical Specification

Price £6999 including hard-shell case and Schaller straplocks
Body Mahogany
Top Flamed eucalyptus
Neck Birdseye maple: dovetailed set neck
Nut Bell brass
Fingerboard Birdseye maple with pearl inlays
Scale 34"/864mm
Frets 24
Finish 'Satin'
Tuners Fodera-branded Schaller M4
Bridge Fodera custom-made
Pickups 2 x Seymour Duncan Dual Coils
Hardware Gold
Controls Stacked master volume/tone roll-off, passive/active switch, coil tap switch, active midrange switch, active bass, middle treble, pan, output jack

The neck is made from three pieces of maple, the centre section contrasting against the outer two pieces by being highly figured. As well as looking great, these variations in grain pattern presumably add structural rigidity. The eucalyptus-faced headstock has been created by adding maple 'wings' to either side of the neck assembly above the small, comfortable volute. The fingerboard, with its neatly inlaid, mother-of-pearl 'tulip' markers, is Brazilian rosewood, and the medium frets are, as you would expect, perfectly flat and polished. Special mention must ago to the gorgeous pickup covers, made to match the body, right down to the book-matched eucalyptus tops with mahogany and ebony sides.

There are several things about the Monarch Deluxe that sets it apart from most basses, one of which is the construction of the neck joint. In a way, it has certain similarities to the old Gibson 'set neck' design used on basses like the EB0 and EB3. The joint used on

the Fodera is probably stronger, being dovetailed, but the end result is the same: a heel-less neck that offers unhindered access all the way to the dusty end, and great sustain. This neck join and a few other aspects of the Monarch (like the mahogany body and brass nut) could be considered quite 'old school': all were once commonplace, but they're a lot less so now. I'm not sure why this should be the case, but I am sure that the Fodera was made first and foremost for the way it sounds, form following function with the best possible construction techniques and materials used to that end.

One aspect of this bass that is very contemporary is the complex preamp system. As well as enabling you to use the bass in passive mode, using the tone roll-off and pan controls to adjust your sound, you can flick the switch to active mode, where you can choose to have the pickups series or parallel, and use the three-band active EQ with a switchable mid.

Finally, the large gold custom-made bridge is beautifully engineered, with adjustment in every plane and as good-looking as it is functional. Security strap buttons and Fodera-branded Schaller machines complete the hardware check.

Sounds And Playability

It's hard to separate the stunning looks and build quality of this bass from its function as an instrument and listen to it objectively, but let's try. The first thing to say is that plugged in and strapped on, the bass is perfectly weighted. I'd been trying to decide whether or not the headstock looked a little outsized compared to the rest of the bass, but given the balance and amazing sustain, I have to concede that, aesthetics aside, it's perfect.

With the controls set flat, the tonal centre for this bass seems to be focused around the upper mids. It's hardly scientific, but I reckon that a frequency response curve would show a slight increase centred around 2kHz. This means that even without touching the controls you have a great punchy fingerstyle sound with ringing harmonics and sharp definition. And, of course, this is just your starting point.

Still listening to the flat sound, it seems to me that higher up the neck, there's the slightest bias to the treble side. This is only noticeable when you're soloing. The notes played high up on the G and D strings seem to have a definition and focus that I can only imagine comes with a tiny increase in comparative gain. Having played the bass for some time, the balance and response across the strings is absolutely perfect, so how can this be? I can only conclude that, either by accident or design there is something in this bass's DNA or (as is more likely) some quality within the timbers that creates this effect. Whatever the case, it means that this is an amazing bass for soloing, allowing you to switch between supporting role and spotlight without touching the controls.

Switching the bass to active mode means that a whole new spectrum of tones become available, but this is a powerful EQ and it takes time and practice to quickly get to the sounds you want. One neat function is the midrange switch. This enabled me to set up a good overall EQ, then, by flicking up this switch, swapping between a great slap tone and a driving fingerstyle sound with punch and clarity – almost the definition of a classy modern bass tone.

Conclusion

I hope, like the Strad mentioned earlier, this bass doesn't end up in the hands of a collector, locked away and only taken out for show and tell: that would be such a pity. The build quality, timbers and hardware on this bass are all of the highest quality. Then again, I said the same thing about the GMR fretless that we recently reviewed, and that bass was over two grand cheaper – so what are you paying the extra for? Are Fodera basses so expensive because, like many luxury items of limited supply and high demand, they can be? I don't think so. If I were asked whether I thought that the Fodera Monarch Deluxe was worth, for instance, two of Roger Sadowsky's instruments, or three Fender Custom shop basses, I'd have to say probably not. But would I buy the Fodera if I had the cash? You bet. ■

What We Think

Plus Exclusive and as close to the pinnacle of the bass-maker's art as we've seen, both in terms of materials, construction and sound

Minus Eye-wateringly expensive: the truss-rod cover looks a bit plasticky, and the Monarch has a complex preamp

Overall It's a paradox that many of those who most deserve an instrument like this can't afford it, but if your lottery numbers come up, you won't be disappointed.

BGM Rating Out Of Five

Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Value For Money	✪✪✪✪½

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GALLIEN-KRUEGER

MB800

Gallien-Krueger's flagship MB800 micro-amp is the latest offering in the downsizing revolution. Can Lieutenant Dave Clarke handle this little monster?

In a world where just about every gigging bass player has apologetically requested the assistance of someone to help manoeuvre a monolithic bass rig into position, it's little wonder we're revelling in the continued rise of the micro-amp. Consider that Gallien-Krueger's MB800 has the ability to belt-out a staggering 800w at four ohms, yet isn't much bigger than a Nintento Wii, and it's easy to understand why. Forget the car boot: this amp could be stowed away in the glove box. It really does slip easily into a gig bag, too, and weighing in at just 4.9lbs, you'll hardly notice you're carrying it. As chiropractors unite to ban such technological advances from further diminishing income derived from fixing crocked bassists, it's clear the micro-amp is here to stay. But size isn't everything, right?

Build Quality And Features

With dimensions measuring just 1.75" (height) by 11" (width) by 9" (depth), the MB800 really is incredibly compact: it's hard to believe that this amp can deliver on the promise of a mighty 800w. Housed in a brushed metal casing, the amp sits on four chunky rubber feet, giving it two-thirds of an inch clearance from the cab of your choice. The amp can also be easily racked, with its neat 'ears' already in place on both sides of the front panel.

When switching the amp on, the first thing you'll notice is that all the front panel controls are illuminated. Nothing over the top, just simple lighting for ease of use during those dimly-lit moments onstage. In addition to the input socket and mute switch, there's a -10dB pad/clip indicator, a contour control and Gain A and Gain B/Level B controls. The level control for Gain B allows for an additional preamp gain level to be set, independent of Gain A. Gain B is activated by simply pressing the knob, or by activating the included footswitch.

The master volume control has a pushbutton limiter, so if power-amp clipping occurs, the knob's indicator flashes red, indicating that the limiter should be engaged. The front panel also features a four-band EQ and, as you would expect, the contour and gain controls enable ease of access to both clear, crisp tones and the infamous GK snarl. The rear panel features a ground lift, a balanced direct out, a pre/post EQ button, an input for the footswitch, a tuner output, return and send FX jack sockets and a headphone/line out socket and switch.

Driven by a Class D power supply and power amp, the MB 800 is kept from overheating by continuously variable fan cooling. Another key characteristic is the FET (field effect transistor) driven preamp which, as with all GK preamps, incorporates their GIVE (Gate Induced Valve Effect) technology for a consistent bass tone.

Sound Quality

After hooking the amp up to a Tech Sound System 2x10 cabinet, I switched the amp on and was immediately greeted by the aforementioned illuminated front panel. Using an Aria Pro II SB-1000 to get a basic level, I altered the EQ to suit and decided to crank up the amp in true 'let's see what this baby can do' style. After all, with the promise of such immense power from such a tiny package, you've got to erase any cynicism you might have, right?

Now, for those of you who've seen the film *Back To The Future*, you'll recall the scene where Marty McFly plugs into Doc Brown's mega-amp and, after turning everything up to max, hits a power chord that sends him flying through the air, propelled backwards by the sheer force of the volume. Of course, that didn't happen here, but when the power of the MB800 was fully unleashed, that scene immediately sprang to mind. Make no mistake: this is very, very loud.

Even when pushing the amp to its limit, the tone remained clear. It was simply cruising at incredible volume. In fact, my only real concern was the possibility of blowing a speaker. Sure, the amp's fans were working a little harder by this point, and we eventually got the power amp to clip (thus triggering the master volume's warning to engage the limiter), but at that kind of volume you'd expect this to happen.

Personally, I never need to be that loud in a gig situation, so I was left in no doubt that the MB800 really does have the power – and headroom – to meet most gigging bassists' needs. Of course, if you're playing the O2 Arena next week you might look for something a little bigger, but, seriously, how many of us will be gracing one of the enormo-dome's stages in the foreseeable future?

So, what about the tone? Something's got to give when squeezing so much glory into such a small unit, after all. We've already established that the MB800 has more volume than a hen night in Essex, so no problems there. What did concern me, though, was that with the EQ set in a flat 12 o'clock position, there seemed to be an overload of low-mid frequencies, which I really didn't like. I only seemed to find the sound I was looking for after I'd rolled down nearly all of the low-mid EQ.

However, knowing that my Aria is famous for its active mid-range savagery, I switched to passive mode and this made a huge difference to the overall sound, although that low-mid EQ was still rolled down to the seven o'clock position. At this point, I was starting to think that the SB1000 wasn't well suited to extracting the best from the MB800. However, I soon discovered that this is where the amp's contour control comes into its own, decreasing those mid-range frequencies while boosting the bass and top end.

Happy that I'd found a solution to what I thought might be a problem, I decided to switch basses, opting for a five-string Dingwall Afterburner 1. With the Dingwall being a completely different animal to the SB-1000, I needed to add considerably more gain and, once again, I found myself rolling down the low-mid EQ, but only to the 10 o'clock position this time, with the treble and bass settings both at 2 o'clock. Once again, the contour control was swiftly used to good effect. Incidentally, the high-mid EQ is a much more subtle affair compared to the low-mid counterpart, and using it felt like garnish on the excellent tone I'd just found to suit the acoustics of my rehearsal studio.

> "By experimenting with the EQ and contour settings, it was pretty easy to find a range of sounds that most bassists would be more than happy with in both a studio and live setting"

In the interests of science, and with the Dingwall's B-string winking at me, I turned the MB800's bass EQ up to the max and was soon revelling in the incredible warmth of the truly huge bottom-end, while still retaining remarkable clarity. Most impressive. Switching to Gain B/Level B setting on the amp, I found that wicked GK growl in abundance. I was soon running through overdriven bass gems such Stevie Wonder's 'I Wish' and the Stranglers' 'Peaches' with a big Jazz Club grin on my face. Nice.

By experimenting with the EQ and contour settings, it was pretty easy to find a range of sounds that most bassists would be more than happy with in both a studio and live setting. A quick hook-up to different cabs – this time a Markbass 4x10 and 1x15 – and we had an even heftier sound on our hands. Hell, I even went back to the SB-1000, and was soon moving dust from the rafters and panicking those whose job it is to monitor the Richter scale. I still had that low-mid EQ turned down, though…

Conclusion

As one of the best examples of state-of-the-art micro-amps, the MB800 completely deserves Gallien-Krueger's considerable reputation. It's incredibly powerful, sonically versatile and very easy to use. Add to that the amp's unbelievable portability and you really are getting a lot of value for the £569 price tag. While I have very few criticisms of this remarkable amp, the lack of features found on other micro-amps, such as a chromatic tuner or the ability to save any EQ settings, as found on TC Electronic's RH750 for example, might put some off. However, clocking in at £250 cheaper than the RH750, I'm confident that the MB800 will establish itself as one of the best value-for-money micro-amps on the market.

If you'd presented me with the MB800 20 years ago, I'd have accused GK of having dabbled with black magic to make such a beast. However, bass amplification has come a long way in a short time and, in 2012, good things really do come in small packages… ■

Technical Specification

Price £569 approx
Made in China
Inputs 1/4 inch jack
Outputs Balanced DI, effects loop jacks, tuner output, switchable line out/headphone jack
EQ 4 band EQ treble, high-mid, low-mid and bass
Output Power 800 watts at 4 ohms, 560 watts at 8 ohms
Controls Two available gain modes, -10dB pad, mute switch, contour control, level control for Gain B, master volume with pushbutton limiter
Weight 4.9lbs (2.23kg)
Dimensions 1.75" x 11" x 9" / 44mm x 279mm x 228mm

What We Think

Plus Incredible power from such a small, light amp. Superb price
Minus Low-mid EQ needed reining in with contour control
Overall A brilliant addition to the micro-amp family

BGM Rating Out Of Five

Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Value For Money	✪✪✪✪✪

YAMAHA BB BASSES
ROCK THE STAGE

Diagonal Body Thru Stringing

Vintage Plus Bridge

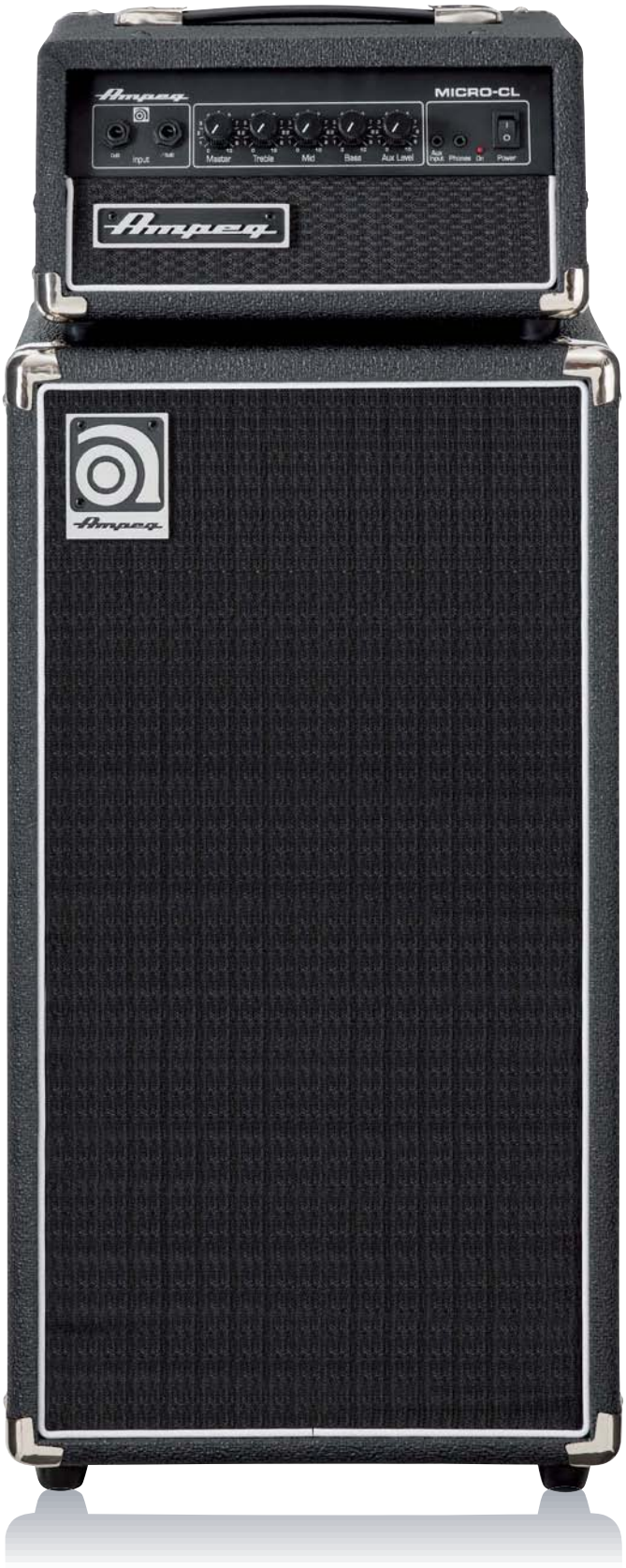
YASH Designed Pickups

Contact Details

Loud Technologies
Unit 1, Century Point
Halifax Road
Cressex Business Park
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire HP12 3SL

Five hundred quid for an Ampeg stack? You're having a larf, guv. Or, as Kev Sanders discovers, perhaps not...

AMPEG MICRO CL STACK

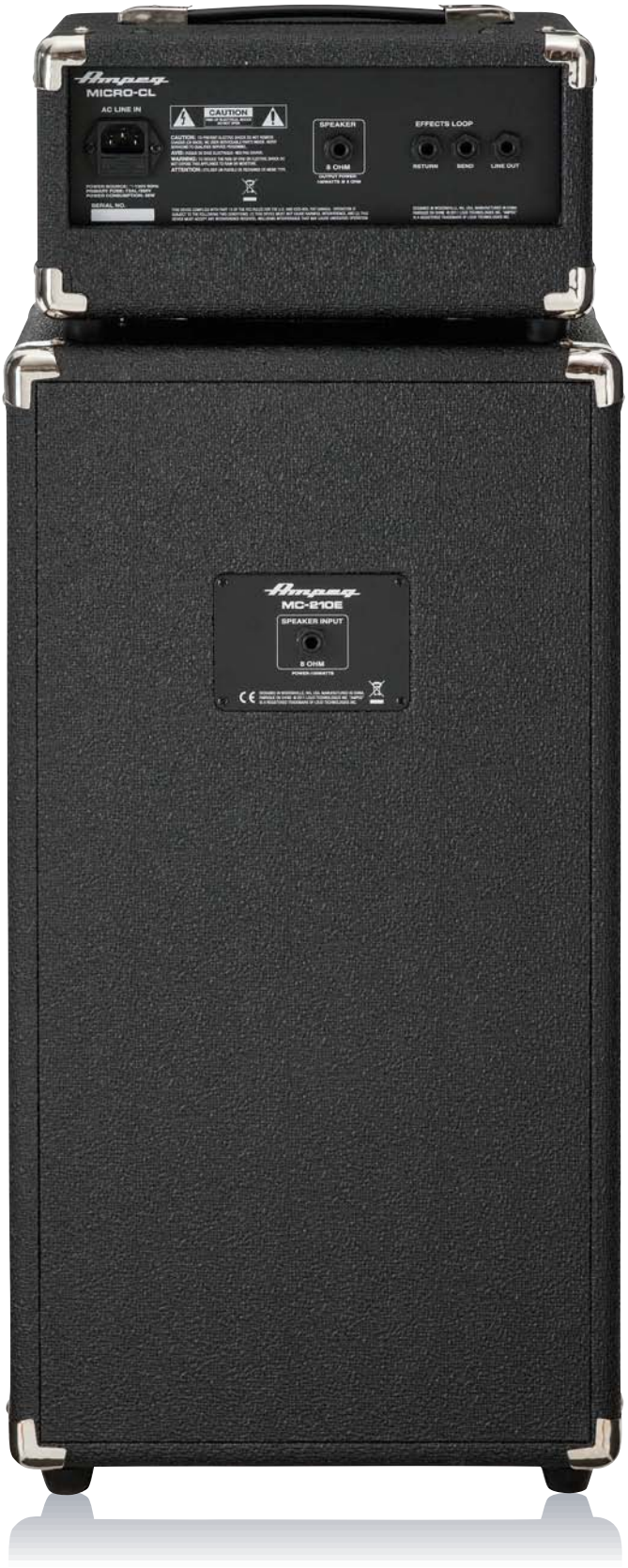


Of course, we'd all love a full size Ampeg SVT rig. Who wouldn't? They're legendary; the bass amp equivalent of a 60s Ford Thunderbird – expensive, big, powerful and very, very cool. The problem has always been that, like the car, cost and size makes it impractical for most bass players. No doubt realising this, in 2009 Ampeg came up with a 'micro' version of the mighty SVT VR rig. Now, following on from the success of that amp, they've released a cut-down version of big CL stack too. The cynical among you could be forgiven for thinking that this all sounds like ideas from the bean-counters and marketing guys. "Maximising product revenue stream by integrating core brand values at lower price points...", I can almost see the internal memo now. Anyway, let's see how it stacks up (sorry).

Construction And Features

Visually, there's no mistaking which family this shrunken head comes from. The angled fascia, hard black Tolex covering with its white piping and black nylon cloth front grille all nod to the mighty SVT-CL head, as used by thousands of rock and roll bass players the world over. Like the full-size amp, it's solid and well-made too, with high-quality chrome corner protectors, handle and chunky rubber feet.

Although the preamp section is even more basic than that of the big CL, it's well laid out, with the controls and functions neatly split into three sections. First, on the left are the instrument inputs: a 1/4" jack at 0db and a second input, padded at -15dB for active basses. The middle section is dedicated to the EQ and gain functions with first up the volume control. Having no separate gain stage means that if you like your bass sound with a little overdrive, you'll need to play at a volume level at which the amp starts clipping. Given the absence of valves in the preamp section, a better solution would be to add a gain stage in the form of a foot pedal overdrive.



Despite the EQ controls being labelled from 0 to 10 clockwise, they're actually active with 0dB at 12 o'clock. Treble offers a healthy plus or minus 15dB of adjustment at 6kHz, Middle has 11dB of cut or boost, this time at 600Hz, and Bass has plus or minus 11dB at 50Hz. Given the size and power rating of the CL cab, this is quite a wide EQ spread; let's hope the speakers can handle that low end! Lastly, in the middle section of the front panel there's a volume control for the auxiliary input. This is a really useful feature, and one that's appearing on more and more amps these days. It allows you to plug in and match the volume level of your iPod, CD player, phone or other device to that of the bass, meaning you can practise along to backing tracks or songs you're learning. Previously, we've only seen this on a few of the better spec'd practice combos, although why it should be the preserve of small amps only is a bit of a mystery. The last preamp section has two mini jack inputs for the aux in and headphones, plus an on/off switch with a status light. On the back of the Micro CL is the mains socket, a single jack speaker output, send and return FX loop and an unbalanced 1/4" jack DI out. So, all easy to use and straightforward.

Like the amp, the CL cab is designed to look like a miniature version of the mighty SVT 8x10 cab and, but for the full-width tilt handle and baffle-mounted wheels of the original, it almost does. Although it's small, it's still pretty hefty, and the single top-mounted strap handle is sufficient, but only just. Like the amp, the cab has just one 8-ohm speaker jack, meaning that you can't link another cab to boost amp power and volume level. Of course, this takes away one of the main benefits of having a separate amp and speaker; that you can mix and match various cab options, but I guess the plus side is that the amp and cab can be perfectly matched to one another.

Inside are two pressed chassis 10" drivers, baffle-mounted just like the ones used in the full-size SVT cabs. These 50w speakers are referred to as LF or low frequency, but in reality they need to convey the full range of frequencies as there's no horn or HF unit within the cabinet. However, it's well put together and the materials and construction are well up to Ampeg's usual high standards.

> "It has a clear, articulate and distortion-free sound with plenty of low end grunt and a mid punch that makes it sound much bigger than it looks"

Sounds

Ampeg and Fender go together like a horse and carriage, so to give the Micro CL stack a good try-out we first plugged in a nice early-60s Fender Jazz. With the EQ set flat, the first thing you notice is that despite the absence of valves, the little rig actually has quite a distinctive warm, almost vintage sound. This is probably down to the lack of HF unit in the unported cab, but if you like that old Jamerson/Portaflex tone it may be just what you're looking for and it certainly suits the old Fender. As mentioned previously, the amp EQ may be simple, but it's powerful and that means that a whole range of modern, bright and cutting tones are also available.

Plugging in an active six-string didn't bother the rig at all, although the Bass control needed to be backed off a little at gig levels to prevent the amp and drivers working too close to their limits. Another consequence of the cab design I discovered is that it's quite directional: you really need to be stood directly in front of the rig at gigs or rehearsals. Moving 'off axis' means you'll be struggling to hear yourself when the volume goes up.

Plugging in the double bass highlighted another strength and potential market. Whether by accident or design, the preamp works exceptionally well with the piezo output from an acoustic bass, even without too much adjustment from the EQ, the tone was life-like and powerful – a rare treat for most string bass players.

Technical Specification

Ampeg Micro CL Head
Price £499
Made In China
Power Output 100w at 8 ohms
Inputs 2 (1x 0dB, 1x -15dB)
Speaker Outputs 1 x ¼" jack
EQ Controls Treble (+ or – 15dB @ 6kHz), Middle (+ or – 11dB @ 600Hz), Bass (+ or – 11dB @ 50Hz)
Features FX loop, unbalanced line out, aux in with volume control, headphone out
Weight 6.35kg
Dimensions 310 x 255 x 173mm

Ampeg Micro CL Cabinet
Speakers 2x10 LF 50w Ampeg pressed chassis
Power Handling 100W
Inputs 1 x ¼" jack
Impedance 8 ohms
Frequency Response 57Hz to 5kHz
Weight 15kg
Dimensions 332 x 280 x 630mm

What We Think

Plus Simple to use, works well with a wide range of instruments.
Minus No gain stage, you can't link another cabinet
Overall Despite its size, this is a serious piece of kit, with Ampeg sound and quality that doesn't break the bank – or back

BGM Rating Out Of Five

Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪½
Value For Money	✪✪✪✪✪

Conclusion

Although the Micro CL's appearance invites comparison with the full-size stack, it's unfair to draw too many conclusions in relation to the SVT rig. Judged on its own merits though, and compared to other 100w bass amps of similar price, it stands up well. Despite the limitations of flexibility, size and output power, the Micro CL is a serious piece of kit. It has a clear, articulate and distortion-free sound with plenty of low end grunt and a mid punch that makes it sound much bigger than it looks. Of course, there are limits to what it can handle, and there are other amps, both combos and small rigs, that will give you more volume and headroom, if that's what you need.

Having the Micro CL behind me on stage, I couldn't help but be reminded of a certain *Spinal Tap* moment involving a smaller-than-intended Stonehenge, but size and stature aside, and taking all things in to account, this is a great little setup. It's big enough for small gigs and rehearsals, and the Ampeg badge certainly carries a degree of kudos. ■

PROMENADE MUSIC

01524 410 202
www.promenademusic.co.uk

4 String Basses

5038 - Duesenberg Starplayer 4, Trans Orange

Fender

4882 - Fender USA 62 Vintage Precision Sunburst
9084 - Fender American Special Jazz Bass, CAR
9083 - Fender Am Special Jazz Bass, Sunburst
9413 - Fender American Special Jazz Bass, White
9353 - Fender Am St Hand Stained Ash Jazz Bass
8431 - Fender USA Standard Jazz Bass in Black
9231 - Fender Am Standard Jazz Bass, Sunburst
7943 - Fender Am Stan Precision Bass, Sunburst
9388 - Fender 70s Jazz Bass, Sunburst
9286 - Fender FSR Precision Bass, Sea Foam
7076 - Fender Highway One Precision, Wine
8928 - Fender Marcus Miller Jazz Bass, Sunburst
8113 - Fender Modern Player Available To Order
8929 - Fender Roger Waters Precision Bass
9367 - Fender Select Jazz Bass, Amber Burst
4749 - Fender Standard Precision, Candy Red
9284 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass, Arctic White
5572 - Fender Standard Precision, Arctic White
5190 - FleaBass The Wild One Junior, Black
9138 - G&L L2000 Tribute Bass, 3-Tone Sunburst

LEVIN

4999 - Levin LB100J, Antique Sunburst
6640 - Levin LB200, Cherry Sunburst
6780 - Levin LB400, Redburst

LODESTONE

8073 - Lodestone Primal Artist
8075 - Lodestone Primal Instinct J Bass, Green
8076 - Lodestone Primal Instinct J Bass, Sburst
8079 - Lodestone Primal Instinct P Bass, Green
8080 - Lodestone Primal Instinct Pbass Sunburst
8078 - Lodestone Primal Instinct P Bass, Cream
8081 - Lodestone Primal Pro in Chignal Blue
8083 - Lodestone Primal Pro, Rodings White
8082 - Lodestone Primal Pro 4, Tobacco Sunburst

MUSIC MAN

4703 - MusicMan Stingray 2EQ, Blue Pearl
4781 - MusicMan Stingray 3EQ, True Gold
7923 - Musicman Gilded White Classic Stingray 4
8997 - Musicman Sterling SB14 Bass, Sunburst

Overwater

4253 - Overwater Aspiration Artist, Trans Red
4250 - Overwater Aspiration Deluxe 4, Amber
8435 - Overwater Aspiration Std 4, Black Cherry
7849 - Overwater Contemporary Jazz, Trans Blue
8198 - Overwater J Series Deluxe 4, Sunburst
4355 - Overwater UK Perception, Natural
9262 - Peavey Forum Bass, Red, Pre-Owned

RockBass

5122 - Rockbass Fortress 4, Blue
5309 - Rockbass Streamer Standard, Blue Stain

Squier

7204 - Squier Classic Vibe Precision 50s Blonde
7260 - Squier P Bass Std Sp Lefty Antique Burst
4615 - Squier Vintage Modified Jazz 77, Black
9072 - Squier Vintage Modified 70's Jazz, Nat
4417 - Steinberger Spirit XT2 4 String Bass
7922 - Ventures VMB75 Bass Guitar, Candy Apple
8436 - Warwick Thumb Bass 4 Bolt on in Natural
8229 - Washburn WB66 Idol 4 String in Trans Red

WestCoast

6447 - Westcoast BG2, Natural or Trans Red
6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8438 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Black
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, Vintage White
6953 - Yamaha BB424, Vintage White
9350 - Yamaha BB424 Bass Guitar in Black
9000 - Yamaha RBX170
4331 - Yamaha TRB1004J, Trans Black

5 String Basses

9139 - G & L L2500 5 String Bass, Blueburst
8214 - Lightwaves Saber 5 String Fretless Bass
8174 - Lodestone Primal Pro 5, Chignal Blue
5713 - Marleaux M Bass Custom 5, Maple & Walnut
4178 - Marleaux Votan Deluxe 5, Blue Jeans
4920 - MusicMan Stingray 5, Black

Overwater

9002 - Overwater Aspiration Deluxe Bass, Black
9009 - Overwater Contemporary 5-String Bass
7259 - Overwater Perception Std 5, Bubinga
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
9263 - Wesley 5 String Bass Guitar, Purple
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber

YAMAHA

9351 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass Guitar, Black
9352 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass, Sunburst
8275 - Yamaha BB425X, Vintage White
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black

6 String Basses

5723 - Marleaux Consat Custom 6, Natural
9005 - Yamaha TRB1006J 6 String Bass

Acoustic Basses

breedlove

7479 - Breedlove JB350 CR4, Electro 4, Blonde
8301 - Breedlove Electro Acoustic Bass Natural
8687 - Breedlove Passport Plus B350/CB4
7874 - Fender Kingman Bass, Electro 4, Natural

LEVIN

5393 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Black
5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
6782 - Levin LB100 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
7301 - Ovation USA Elite, Electro 4, Natural

Electric Upright Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
4909 - Bridge Cetus Elec. Double - Marble Finishes
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

String Deals

2 Sets of Elite (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Elite (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £35 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £40 inc P&P

Bass Combos

6762 - A arena BASS45 (45W, 1x12)
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)
4942 - AER Amp Two (240W, 1x12)

Ashdown

4389 - Ashdown 220 Touring 112 (220W, 1x12)
4388 - Ashdown 220 Touring 115 (220W, 1x15)
4385 - Ashdown 330 Touring 115H (300W, 1x15)
4386 - Ashdown 330 Touring 210H (307W, 2x10)
4382 - Ashdown 550 Touring (550W, 1x15)
5066 - Ashdown 550 Touring Hybrid (550W, 2x10)
6759 - Ashdown ABM C115 500 Evo 3 (575w, 1x15)
8712 - Ashdown ABM414H 4 x 10 Bass Cabinet
8714 - Ashdown After Eight 20 Bass Combo
4396 - Ashdown DP200 Drophead 15H (200W, 1x15)
8757 - Ashdown Electric Blue 12 220
8758 - Ashdown Electric Blue EB15 220
5669 - Ashdown EB180 12 Evo2 (180W, 1x12)
5668 - Ashdown EB180 15 Evo2 (180W, 1x15)
5665 - Ashdown Five Fifteen (100W, 1x15)
8751 - Ashdown Five Fifteen ABM100 Combo
8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
4397 - Ashdown LB30 Drophead 115H (30W, 1x15)
6454 - Ashdown MAG C115-300 Evo2 (300W, 1x15)
8718 - Ashdown Mag C115 300 Evo III Bass Combo
8722 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Evo III Bass Combo
8720 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Bass Combo
8727 - Ashdown Mag C410T 600 Evo III
9320 - Ashdown MiBass C110-200
9321 - Ashdown MiBass C115 550 Bass Combo
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten 40 Bass Combo
5666 - Ashdown Perfect Ten (30W, 1x10)
9311 - Ashdown TE12 C115h Bass Combo
9310 - Ashdown TE12 C210h 12 Band Bass Combo
8183 - Ashdown TourBus 10 Union Jack
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
5062 - Ashdown Tourbus 15 (15W, 1x8)
8988 - EA Euphonic Audio iAmp 350 Bass Head
8987 - Eden Nemesis RS410 Combo

Fender

4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
8284 - Fender Rumble 30 Bass Combo
4237 - Fender Rumble 350 (350W, 2x10)
9278 - Hartke A70 Solid State Bass Amp Combo
9008 - Hartke HMH112C Bass Combo
9281 - Hartke Hydrive HMH210C Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

LINE 6

6020 -Line6 LowDown Studio 110 (75W, 1x10)

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P (400W, 2x10)
6238 - Mark Bass CMD103H (400W, 3x10)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (400W, 1x12)
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W, 1x15)
5473 - Mark Bass Micromark (50W, 1x6)
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (400W, 1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (400W, 1x15W)
5471 - Mark Bass Minimark (250W, 2x6)

Marshall

5660 - Marshall MB15 (15W, 1x8)
6768 - Marshall MB150 (150W, 1x15)
5659 - Marshall MB30 (30w, 1x10)
5433 - Marshall MB4210 (450W, 2x10)
5658 - Marshall MB4410 (450W, 4x10)
6769 - Marshall MB60 (60W, 1x12)

ORANGE

5232 - Orange Crush PiX 100BXT (100W, 1x15)
5234 - Orange Crush PiX 25BX (25W, 1x8)
5233 - Orange Crush PiX 50BXT (50W, 1x12)
8061 - Peavey MAX126 10 Watt Bass Combo
5965 - Peavey Max 112 (35W, 1x12)
5964 - Peavey Max 115 (50W, 1x15)

Roland

6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w, 1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
8252 - SWR Black Beauty 350W Bass Combo
5008 - Stagg 20 BA (20W, 1x8)
4599 - TC Electronic BG500 115 500W, 1x15

Bass Heads

4387 - Ashdown 330, 330W
4398 - Ashdown 427 Small Block 427W
4384 - Ashdown 550, 550W
8706 - Ashdown ABM1000 Lite Evo III
8704 - Ashdown ABM2000 Lite Evo III
6760 - Ashdown ABM500 EVO III 575W
6250 - Ashdown ABM500RC Evo III 575W
6761 - Ashdown ABM900 EVO 3, 575+575W
4399 - Ashdown JJ500 JJ Burnel Sig 575W
5338 - Ashdown BTA400 400W
8707 - Ashdown CTM300 Classic Tube Magnifier
4395 - Ashdown Drophead DP200H 200w Valve
5064 - Ashdown Little Bastard 30, 30W
4875 - Ashdown Little Bastard 30, 30W UK
8708 - Ashdown Little Bastard 550 Head
5671 - Ashdown Little Giant 350, 350W
6455 - Ashdown MAG300H Evo III 300W
9056 - Ashdown Mag300H Evo2 Bass Amp Head
8713 - Ashdown Mag600 Head Evo III Bass Head
6710 - Asdown MiBass 220
7975 - Ashdown MiBass 550 Bass Amp Head
9309 - Ashdown TE12 500H 12 Band Bass Head
9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
9280 - Hartke LH500 Bass Guitar Amp Head
5500 - Line6 LowDown HD750, 750W
5675 - Mark Bass Little Mark 250 (250w)
5245 - Mark Bass Little Mark 800, 800W
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III (500w)
9035 - Markbass Little Mark Tube Bass Amp Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
5673 - Mark Bass R500 Classic (500W)
5243 - Mark Bass SD1200, 1200W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
9250 - Markbass Classic 300 Head
9251 - Markbass Club SA450 450W Bass Head
5674 - Mark Bass F1 (500w)
9253 - Markbass F500 500W Bass Head
9249 - Markbass L Mark Rocker 500 Bass Amp Head
9255 - Markbass Momark Modular Bass Systems
9252 - Markbass TSA500 500w Bass Head
5434 - Marshall 1992LEM 100W
5652 - Marshall MB450H 450W
6618 - Marshall VBA400 Valve 400W
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
5242 - Orange TB1000 1000W Terror
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
5957 - Peavey Pro VB3 300W
5960 - Peavey Tour 450, 450W
5959 - Peavey Tour VB2 225W
5184 - TC Electronic RH450, 450W

Bass Cabinets

8733 - Ashdown 210T Deep Lite Bass Cab
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
6458 - Ashdown ABM210H Compact (2x10)
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
4376 - Ashdown ABM610 (6x10)
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
4394 - Ashdown CL115 Large (1x15)
4393 - Ashdown CL410H (4x10)
4392 - Ashdown CL414H Plus Horn (4x10)
4391 - Ashdown CL610 Tilt-Cab (6x10)
4390 - Ashdown CL810 (8x10)
6146 - Ashdown NEO115H Compact (1x15)
8170 - Ashdown Klystron NEO410H 4 x10 Bass Cab
6452 - Ashdown MAG115 Deep (1x15)
6451 - Ashdown MAG210T Deep (2x10)
8754 - Ashdown MAG414T Deep Lite
8730 - Ashdown Mag 115 Deep Lite Bass Cab
8755 - Ashdown Mag410T Deep 4 x 10 Bass Cab
8756 - Ashdown Mag810T 8 x 10" Bass Cab
9315 - Ashdown Mi10 Bass Cab
9316 - Ashdown Mi12 Bass Cab
8692 - Ashdown VS112 125 1 x 12 Bass Cab
4379 - Ashdown VS115 200 (1x15)
8691 - Ashdown VS212 200 2 x 12 Bass Cab
8711 - Ashdown VS412 600 Bass Extension Cab
9007 - Hartke HCH112 Bass Cab
9292 - Hartke HCH410 Hydrive 410 Bass Cab
5371 - Line6 LowDown 410 (4x10)
5430 - Mark Bass Classic 152 (2X15)
4766 - Mark Bass NY804 New York 804 (8 x 4)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
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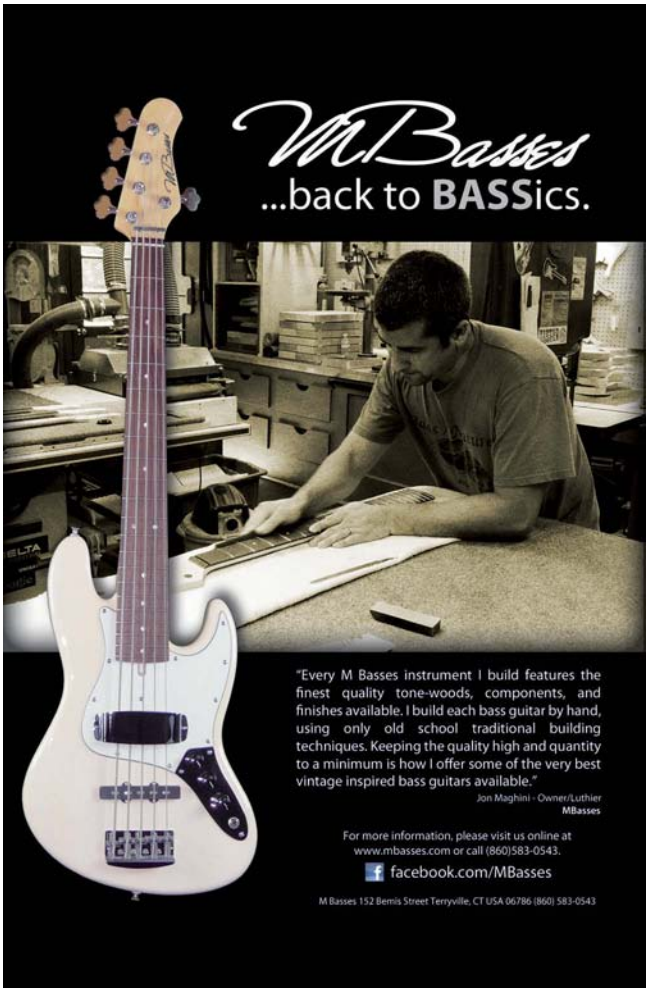
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THE WOODSHED

Of the many bass makers in the world, few can apply designs to the bass template with the anarchic panache of Tony Cochran. Joel McIver heads to Ohio to find out more...

"I'm privileged to have fans and buyers of diverse talents and visual desires," says US bass modifier and artist Tony Cochran. "They love guitars, they love art, and they want to own something a little outside the box. I have an international market of art collectors, musicians, producers, pop stars, you name it."

Our man Cochran is no ordinary bass maker, preferring to add his own trademark spin to their design, giving them a new, and often unexpected, presence. As the Columbus, Ohio-based artist tells us, "I modify existing instruments into unique and original works of art that maintain their function as musical instruments. My wife Vickie and I started our company about 18 months ago and we decided to open our website on 11 September 2011. Vickie does everything but make the guitars. She works the website, Facebook, Twitter, and all that. If it weren't for her expertise I would just have a basement of really cool-looking guitars!" Ah, we're familiar with that very dynamic…

As you can see from the frankly unnerving images of Cochran's bass designs, he is a man of singular vision. How did he get into this business, we ask? "My past is chequered!" he laughs. "I was trained in art school to be a painter, but I spent the first 15 years of my career working in an autobody shop and trying to get the art business to catch fire. I left the shop to do art full-time, but got sidelined by an offer to have a comic strip I created become nationally syndicated. I jumped at the chance and my strip, Agnes, is now in over 200 newspapers worldwide." Type 'Agnes (comic strip)' into Wikipedia if you don't believe him.

"I started modifying guitars to scratch a creative itch that I couldn't get at with my comic strip," he continues. "My brother brought me a guitar from New York that he didn't want any more – and it snowballed from there!"

Asked how he approaches his bass redesigns, Cochran explains, "I reimagine guitars that already exist. I have done

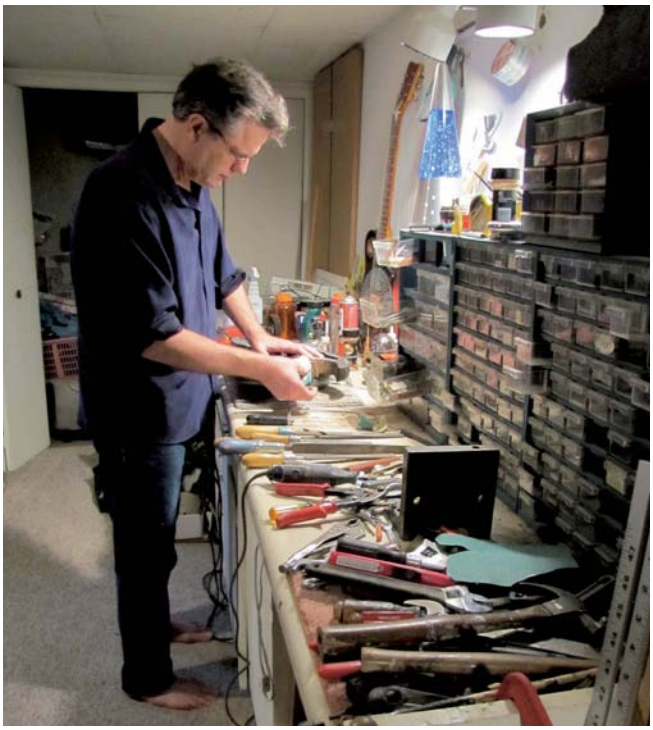
a number of basses so far, but their models really weren't important to me. There wasn't anything special about them when I started, just good bones to build on. They had nice shapes to their heads, good solid bodies, straight necks and so on. They have to have a nice action, a ready playability, and good sound to them."

He continues, thoughtfully, "I see it finished when I look at the guitar for the first time, sort of like a vision, which I try to match in real life. I use a huge assortment of found objects, like bits of brass, rust-tinged whatevers, switches, wires, and copper whatnots. I pick them up at garage sales, flea markets, and Salvation Army stores among other places. They need to be scaled to fit the guitar. I use screwdrivers, hammers, saws, files, grinders, and shears. I make sure every piece is violated to the same degree and then incorporate it into a final horrible, beautiful visage on the guitar. After each piece is whacked, ground and sawed into shape, it is fastened permanently. Then there is a final marriage between all old and new surfaces. I sand here, buff there; a little steel wool is nice, and a careful acid wash works well at times. The guitar is then sealed with a method of terrible secrecy. I make sure everything still works, string it, and then set it up in a completely neutral manner. I will then look at it off and on for a week, to be sure I am finished."

It's clear to see that this is not your average guitar designer, or indeed visual artist. The process behind Cochran's work is enough to make any of us think carefully about what we're doing here. "My bass philosophy is to make a musical instrument into something that is visually arresting, unforgettable, and stunning," he says. "The musician's job is to make music when the bass is being played. My job is to help it continue to sing when it's at rest. I even write the guitars new histories. They are too cool to have the boring past they probably had."

Wait – does that mean he'll happily remodel your beloved Fender from the 50s? Never fear: "I won't modify a classic guitar," he says. "There are too few of them and they should be preserved for future generations to enjoy in a pristine state." Thank heavens for that. More power to this man…

For more information, check out www.tonycochranguitars.com or www.facebook.com/tonycochranguitars. Email the man himself at tony@tonycochranguitars.com. ■



Chris Hanby

Chris has amassed a staggering amount of insightful, interesting and sometimes irrelevant information on bass guitar equipment during his career as a professional bassist. Some would say it's a gift, others that he is a nerd, either way we continue to push boxes of electronics under his nose and make him report to us on his favourites.

MXR M169 Carbon Copy

Delay can be used to great effect on bass, so those looking to add a new dimension to their sound can really get creative with these simple repeating stomps. Analogue delays favour the beefy sound of the bass guitar, and their grainy quality only enhances the vibe. MXR is a name almost every guitarist will be familiar with, and, in recent times, its Carbon Copy delay pedal has been seen on an increasing number of bassists' boards.

History

Michael Laiacona, Keith Barr and Terry Sherwood founded the original company, MXR Innovations, in Rochester, New York, in 1972. Their bombproof boxes, pragmatic designs and small sizes led the way for effects pedal production. Musicians quickly saw the benefits, not only in form factor, but also in the quality of tone. As a result, many became instant classics. Original Phase 90, Distortion+, Blue Box and Dyna Comp pedals from this golden era are now collector's items and fetch a high price.

Despite some heavyweight artists such as Eddie Van Halen, Jimmy Page and Keith Richards using and endorsing its products, MXR went bankrupt in 1984 due to increased competition from Japanese pedal manufacturers. Jim Dunlop subsequently purchased the brand in 1987 and reissued many of these pioneering stomps. Dunlop has also released some new additions to the MXR line, such as the Fullbore Metal, GT-OD and Carbon Copy delay, along with an award-winning range of bass-specific effects, which uphold MXR's heritage while continuing to win over new fans.

In Use

The distinctive sound of the analogue delay is due to the increasing degradation of the signal. Analogue delay pedals use a Bucket Brigade Devices (BBD) IC chip that stores a small chunk of the sound in one stage. It is then fed into the next stage of the chip where it is stored again. Each time this process occurs, the signal becomes progressively more corrupted, so that with each repeat of the delay, it deteriorates.

It may or may not surprise you to know that the Carbon Copy's circuit was designed by effects legend Jeorge Tripps, the man who brought us the Way Huge brand, and whose Swollen Pickle fuzz and Pork Loin overdrive are both loved by bass players. He also designed the Aqua Puss delay, hailed by guitarists for its bright slapback, which is perfect for country/rockabilly. Now that he's started working with Jim Dunlop, his handiwork can be seen in many of its pedals, including the MXR range and the recent reissues of the Way Huge line.

First up, the Carbon Copy feels very robust with a pleasing weight to it. It's incredibly well-engineered, with solid, gig-proof controls and an impeccable fit and finish.

The controls are labelled Regen, Delay and Mix. Regen changes the number of repeats from single to almost infinite, while Delay varies the speed of the repeats. It has a very wide spread for an analogue delay, spanning from 20ms (classic slapback) to 600ms (long, Floyd-esque delay). Mix adjusts the dry/wet balance of the effect. The sound of the Carbon Copy, compared to standard digital delays, is much darker and less brittle. Even with the noticeable treble rolloff, this pedal's depth and warmth are undeniable. It gives a thick, spacey and musical delay in every setting. If you kick in the Mod button, a subtle chorus adorns the repeats, greatly enhancing the spaced-out quality of the sound.

Conclusion

It's good to see that Jim Dunlop is continuing the MXR institution, producing quality products that are convenient in size and simple to use. The Carbon Copy crystallises this ethos. After all it was designed by a legend, wears the name of a legend, and is sure to become a legend. ■

Availability

The MXR Carbon Copy is widely available in most music shops and online at circa £125.

Alternatives

There are many analogue delays on the market, and the range in price is extremely wide. As the Carbon Copy is so competitively priced, it's very difficult to recommend units with the same features for less money, but we'll begin with the EHX Memory Man reissue range, as they include models that should suit all wallets. As the price increases, so do the number and type of functions available. The cheapest is the Memory Toy, which has a maximum 550ms delay time and features a switchable chorus effect for about £65. Following that is the Memory Boy, which is much the same as the Toy but with added depth control, vibrato mode and expression pedal input, for £85. The Deluxe Memory Boy offers more control options at £120. The reissue Deluxe Memory Man at around £225 is also worth a look, for classic analogue delay/modulation effects.

Those with more to spend on a standalone analogue delay might want to look at the Strymon Brigadier. While this is a digital pedal, its DSP algorithm is astonishingly good. It gives up to 5 seconds delay. This is fast replacing many musicians' old analogue delays as it is as good as the originals with all the benefits of digital format. It costs circa £250.

Finally, if it has to be analogue, and only the very best will do, check out the Moog Moggerfooger MF-104Z. At an eyewatering £600-plus, it'll cope with just about anything you can throw at it, can be tweaked extensively and sounds mind-blowing.

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The FrontLine

The collective wisdom of four touring and recording bassists, who have been there, done it and bought the 'You Don't Have To Be Mad To Work Here – But It Helps' t-shirt...

The Jazz Bassist

RUTH GOLLER

Ruth talks about one of the biggest transitions in a bass player's life...

When I decided to take up the double bass, I'd already been playing electric bass for many years. I had developed a technique, a sound and a way of getting around the fretboard that suited me. At first, playing double bass felt like being reborn. I felt as if I knew the instrument, because it was strung in the same way, and that I could find a way of playing it straight away. On top of that, I was excited that the sound was coming from the instrument itself, rather than from an electric box, so I felt very connected to it. It was amazing to experience how quickly one can improve when taking up something new, although at that point I didn't consider it to be something 'new'. To me, it was just another bass, so I practised a lot without taking a proper lesson or frequent breaks. I thought that because I knew where the notes were, I would find my own way of making it work.

I was very wrong… and after a short period of time, I developed serious wrist pains, which took me about two years to get over. Coming from an electric bass background, my wrists were used to being in a certain position while playing. But now they were doing similar movements, only with more strain, while positioned at a different angle. The first double bass I bought (in ignorance) was far too big for my actual body size. Even though people say bigger instruments and a higher action will give you a bigger sound, I think you get the best sound from the instrument that is right for you in every way. Researching the right strings was also a big help for me. Getting away from very hard metal strings, and finding softer gut strings, or their cheaper imitations, was a big step forward.

Playing-wise, I went through a bit of a journey too. At the beginning I was trying to play the same things that I would play as if I was playing electric bass, because that was what I was hearing in my head. Slowly that changed, and I started hearing different lines when I played the two instruments. I automatically stripped basslines down to their simplest cores and rediscovered open strings. It all started to sound so much better. My double bass playing started to improve, and my electric playing seemed to change too.

soundcloud.com/ruth-goller

The Metalhead

PAOLO GREGOLETTO

The Trivium bassist looks back at his first musical home

About a year after picking up my first bass, I decided that I needed to further my bass studies with some one-on-one instruction. At the time, a massive store called Mars Music had opened up not too far from my home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Picture a grocery store-sized building, packed with gear that would take you a full week to test out properly. This became my new hangout whenever I wasn't in school, and where I spent a few hours each week learning bass and eventually a bit of guitar. The big benefit of this particular Mars Music store was that it drew in some pretty big names for clinics, and sometimes just random appearances, such as the time Jimmy Page happened to stroll through the store. For my bass lessons, a dude named Doug was my main teacher and mentor. He was pretty big into session work, even having played with the Commodores for a bit. On one occasion he was able to arrange a quick lesson and chat with Nathan Watts who was doing an in-store clinic. Nate, as he signed his name, was nice enough to give me a few pointers on my playing and showed me a nice little bass lick that he wrote out on a chart.

Another random introduction was to Felix Pastorius, who was casually jamming in the bass amp section. He was only a few years older then me, but his bass playing was light-years ahead of mine. I got invited to go watch him and his brother Julius jam at a local jazz club in town, and to this day I would rate that as one of the most mind-blowing shows I have ever seen – two bass players, a drummer and a keyboardist just shredding away all night. Though both of those experiences were amazing, easily the highlight of my time at Mars was getting to watch Billy Sheehan do a clinic at the store. He was promoting his pre-amp for Ampeg, and it was just him up on stage doing some of the most unreal bass playing I have ever seen – tapping, slapping, harmonics and just general bass shredding in all its glory. Although I didn't get a personal lesson from him like I had with Nathan Watts, I did get a sweet picture of him and the preamp. Sick! Sadly, the entire Mars Music chain closed down a few years later. Looking back, I doubt I would have discovered half as much musically had I not signed up for bass lessons or bought my first bass there. The only bad thing I remember about the store was having to hear about 10 people murdering a Metallica riff every time I walked through the door…

www.trivium.org

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The Alternative Rocker

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Big Mike of Therapy? gives tips on surviving the festival season

It's the time of year when most lucky sods like us are out doing a run of summer festivals, which is definitely one of the biggest perks of being in a touring band. Inclement weather aside, there's only ever one real downside to these kinds of shows – soundcheck, or as is the default set-up for most festivals, the dreaded no soundcheck. I find a lot of bands stressing about this situation, and I've often seen the lack of soundcheck seriously wreck a musician's buzz. Therapy? tend not to use in-ear monitoring, as that can cause an additional set of logistical problems within the set-up/play/strip it down festival vibe. We just go with the house rigs, which are universally excellent.

Normally I try to keep it simple when it comes to onstage sound. There's no point in bombarding the hapless monitor person with micro details of how you like your bass to sound. Bear in mind that they'll also be getting a host of similar requests from your band mates and crew members. First things first, get the volume of your rig right. There's no point using a club combo if the outdoor stage is 50 metres across and 30 metres deep, with swirling winds blowing the sound right across it. If you're not tied to a mic, try and move a bit closer to your drummer so you can get a clear listen of what they're playing if the monitors are taking a bit longer to settle.

Likewise, if you want to hear a bit more bass, move closer to your amp. Get the knack and you'll find lots of little hotspots dotted all over the stage – there be subs under there! Also bear in mind that the further you stand from the other players, and the further away the PA is, there can be weird little moments of time-delay, and you can easily fall out of time or find the audience applause wiping out the kick drum. At the end of the day, the festival is a celebration of a load of bands entertaining a load of folk. It's more about the whole day than any individual performance, so enjoy it and don't get too fixated on the onstage sound. Lock in, have fun and keep the riffs, water and sunblock flowing.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

The Extended-Range Specialist

STEWART MCKINSEY

Ten-string troubadour Stu's advice on building your dream bass

There's a lot to consider if you want a custom instrument. Builders have experience and know their craft, but the process is a collaboration. Have an idea of what you want, and stay open to suggestions from the artist who is making it. Not all of your ideas may be as feasible as you imagine. What are some of these things?

First of all, look and sound. Many of us think about looks first, but remember that each wood has unique characteristics. Different woods may look cool, but each one adds to the difficulty, build time and price of you bass, and may produce an increasingly neutral sound. Try to have a sound in mind. If you're not familiar with the terms that luthiers use, try to reference some players or songs.

In terms of string-spacing and scale length, if you don't know what you like, the luthier will work with you. But if you have a favourite bass, tell your builder about it. The more information you have, the more likely it is that you will get what you want. Many extended-range bass players favour fanned frets or a multiscale neck. If this is something you're considering, make sure you discuss this with the builder. Is there a specific reason why you want this, or is it just something you think looks cool? And is your builder comfortable with doing it?

With pickups and electronics, if you have some idea of what you're after tonally, there's a better chance your luthier will be able to deliver it. Most builders have preferences or arrangements with certain companies. If there are products the luthier does not use, and you have something different in mind, discuss it. The fun part should be things like hardware and finish. Remember that any relationship is based on mutual respect and communication. You want something special, and many things will play into the build. When the luthier quotes you a build time, allow for random factors. Unexpected complications may arise anywhere in the process, from the materials involved, to the parts that must be ordered, even to the finish application.

Try not to ask for progress photos every other day. Don't change your specifications halfway into the build and get upset when you're told this will mean a delay or added expense. Your luthier understands your enthusiasm and wants you to have your new instrument. But this is a handmade artefact. Do you really want it to be rushed?

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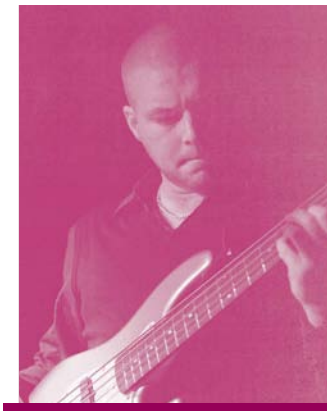


JACK STEVENS

BEGINNING BASS

Welcome to our brand new beginner's column, where Jack Stevens introduces the budding bassist to the pleasures and pitfalls of the low end

JACK STEVENS

Jack Stevens is a bass player, songwriter, producer and teacher. He graduated from Sir Paul McCartney's Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts in 2005 and has gone on to play bass with the likes of Frankmusik, Natasha Hamilton, Craig David and Simon Webbe. He is currently working with Dr. Dijon, Chris McDonald and Shane Beales.

www.jackstevensbass.com

To kick this new column off, I'll be giving you some tips and suggestions for getting comfortable on your bass guitar. What we're intending to create here is a resource for a mixture of players, from complete novices to those who want to refresh their basic knowledge. Potentially, these chapters could be used in your own teaching method.

First things first: apologies in advance to our left-handed readers for the slight bias towards your right-handed counterparts. Our exercises are also geared towards the four-string bass, but you can use these as starting blocks should you have an extended-range instrument.

My first lesson involved singing into a pickup, in an attempt to ascertain whether or not it was just a glorified microphone – thanks for that one, Marc Meggido, my bass teacher for many years. My route to bass was simple: my older sister suggested to me that in order to be a more sought-after musician, I should take up the bass rather than guitar in secondary school. She was right! It was only after studying the bass for some time – and I'm sure that this is the same for other players out there – that I began to appreciate the fundamentals and the role of the bass within music. I also found myself exposed to, and enjoying, a whole new array of musical genres within which the bass plays an important role.

As a teacher, whenever I've started with a student who's new to the instrument, the first things I like to deal with are:

- Understanding your role as a bassist
- A quick warm-up
- Hand positions
- The geography of the bass fingerboard

Understanding your role as a bassist

It's a good idea to know what you're dealing with. Listen to songs that illustrate the function of the bass guitar (or bass synth) within contemporary music. Tracks like 'My Girl' (The Temptations), 'Dance Wiv Me' (Dizzee Rascal) and 'Billie Jean' (Michael Jackson) are great examples of the harmonic, melodic and rhythmical role the bass can play. I always try and latch on to the musical tastes of my students by finding basslines within their preferred genres.

Warming up

One way that I've found to get the blood circulating into your hands and arms, is simply just to shake them out a bit until they feel less tense. It's crucial that you don't start playing the bass with any discomfort. Firstly, you're likely to cause yourself some pain or an injury, and secondly, you won't have much endurance. So always warm up!

Hand positions

If you cup both your knees with each hand, you'll make a C shape with your fingers and thumb. See *figure 1*. Transferring this hand shape to the bass (*figure 2*) is an ideal starting point for fingerstyle technique: we'll look at other ways of utilising the right hand in future columns. Your fretting/left hand should cup the neck of the bass with its thumb placed in the centre of the back of the neck, to act as an anchor and to help you pivot with your fingers or glide up to higher frets or down to lower ones. These approaches can be applied when both sitting or standing. See *figure 3*.

Think about where to rest your thumb if you're playing fingerstyle. With your right hand, you're going to be taking your index and middle finger for a walk across the strings, so rest their tips on the appropriate string, and rest your thumb on either the lowest (in pitch) string available, the most convenient pickup, or anchor it on the body. See *figure 4*.

Geography of the fingerboard

This is something that every player should know inside out. It not only gives you confidence, but opens up your note choice options. *Figure 5* shows a couple of key basics in the layout of a standard bass neck: the open strings (you can't afford not to know their names), and the 5th frets of the E, A and D strings, which share the same note value as the open string above. This is useful for tuning. Take note of the way that tablature follows conventional notation by having the lowest pitch at the bottom.

Keep practising and I'll see you next month!

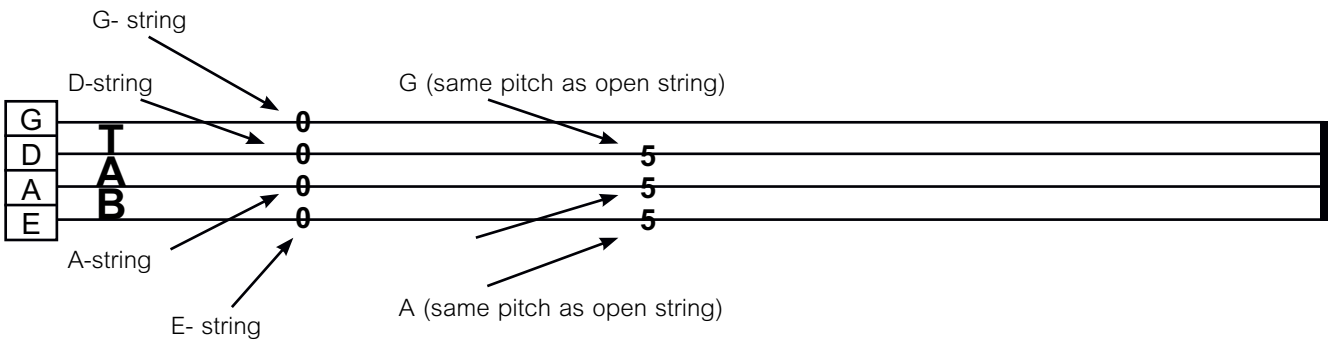
Figure 1

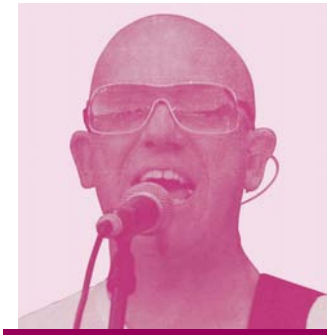
Figure 2

Figure3

Figure 4

Figure 5





Paul Geary

Paul Geary graduated with honours from both Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musician's Institute of Technology in Los Angeles. He is one of the UK's foremost studio bassists, an active session musician and musical director. He has recorded and toured with artists including George Michael, Simply Red, Chris Rea, Nik Kershaw, Donny and Marie Osmond, The Lighthouse Family, Liberty X, Geri Halliwell, Sophie Ellis Bextor, Rachel Stevens, Mary J. Blige and Westlife. As well as this, he still finds time to head up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.

Contact Paul at paulmarkgeary@googlemail.com and visit www.paulgeary.com for more information.

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PG'S TIPS

Paul Geary, session legend and bass guru at the Academy of Contemporary Music, continues his slapping method

In the last issue of *BGM* we looked at some basic thumb and pop exercises based on rhythm with muted notes: we called these dead note percussive attacks. This time I would like to focus on pitch and groove. The following examples use standard notation, in other words T for thumb and P for pluck, but also watch out for H for hammer-on. As before, it is vital you use a metronome or drum machine: set it at 80BPM as a starting point.

Slap Bass Basics

Example 1

I would like to start with a basic slap groove in the key of E. Make sure you get a nice staccato note on the 16th note E octave at the beginning of each bar, and don't be tempted to fill any space with any other sound or grace note. Remember the space and rests make the groove – they are as important as the pitches. Remember to keep the notes even and in time!

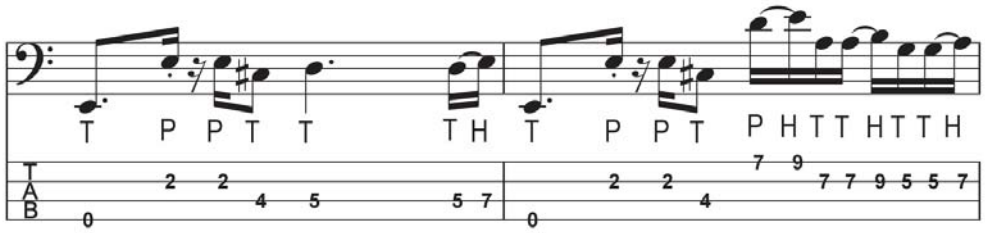
Example 2

As we move on, I'm keeping the bass-line pretty much the same, but adding more rhythm and pitches, but still not cluttering the groove. Watch out for the hammer-on at the end of bars 1 and 3. You need to hit the E on the seventh fret of the A string hard to get the right tone: practise this until it sounds just right. A good exercise is to record yourself practising. Nothing fancy, a dictaphone will do, but it will give you a good idea of how you sound.

In the fourth bar, watch out for the plucked note on the G. You could use the open string, but I think the G on the fifth fret of the D string sounds best: it's just a fatter tone. In the last bar we shoot right up to the 14th and 12th frets on the G string, with a trill on the G. Nothing wrong with a bit of cheese, eh?

Example 3

As with the last example, watch out for the double pluck in the first bar on the note E of the D string. After that, we add our first fill. It is based on the E minor pentatonic scale: in other words, the five-note scale. Concentrate on the combination of thumb and hammer-ons. If you need to, slow this one right down until you get it under your fingers. It's one of my favourite fills and I use this one a lot… probably too much!



Example 4

The last example uses the same bass-line as all the other examples, plus the fill from *example 3*. But it's all about bar 2! You may need to slow this one down. The dead note in the middle of the fill is a crucial rhythmical push that's needed to make the whole line flow. We also make good use of a single string fill, rather than the usual octave shape.

As you practise these, have a go at switching between fingerstyle and slap. It's always harder to switch from one to another within a song. But most importantly, have fun!

Janek Gwizdala

A member of the Institute's visiting bass faculty, Janek is a solo recording artist, musical director for Capitol recording artist VV Brown, and sideman to the likes of Mike Stern, Randy Brecker, Delta Goodrem, Airto and Pat Metheny.
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JANEK GWIZDALA

Triad And Trusted

Our man Gwizdala explains why three isn't a crowd

Isn't learning from the world's best musicians cool? No, I'm not talking about me, before you shoot me any emails about my ego! I'm talking about a situation I found myself in at a soundcheck in Canada last week with Mike Stern and Bob Franceschini, trading ideas and working on harmony and melody. It's the kind of personal insight into a legend like Mike Stern that you can only experience by being in the right place at the right time, and I want to share it with you because he dropped a couple of pretty cool ideas on me.

We were talking about groupings of five notes, and coming up with cell ideas to practise. Mike suggested this idea, which I've aptly titled *Mike Stern Idea 1*, and it basically deals with a C minor Dorian scale, with groupings of five-note cells. I've written it out to cover an octave in C minor, but the first thing I encourage you to do once you've got it under your fingers is move it around the neck to all keys, and become completely fluent with it. As with any of these ideas, it's the fluid execution that's going to help it become a natural extension of your playing and not just another lick you rattle off from time to time.

The start of the first cell is a very simple outline of the minor triad, and once you are aware of where all the notes in a C minor scale land under your fingers through doing this exercise for a while, you're going to notice that you'll be able to come up with your own similar exercises and melodic devices and be creative with your practice and performance routine. I think it's the fluidity with which someone like Mike plays this material that really makes it special. The time feel, the sound, the context and the attitude are all just as, if not more, important than the notes themselves.

Mike Stern Idea 2 again deals with a series of five-note cells, and this time it's a pattern that moves in minor seconds down the neck of the bass. There's no reason why you can't use whole steps or minor thirds, I'm just using half steps for the purpose of this example. Again, play this stuff slowly at first and get a real feel for where it fits under your fingers. Then have a think about where this material might be appropriate in your day-to-day playing, and work on incorporating it into other ideas you have, melodically and in solo terms.

I was scrambling to write the idea down as soon as Mike had played it onstage during soundcheck, and before the gig I went back to the hotel to shed it a little. One thing I've noticed throughout my career is that I'm never successful when I try and play things on the gig the same night that I've been working on them that day. There's a lot to be said for really working on an idea and getting it into your subconscious before you make it an audible aspect of your performance. I also think that the longer you work on putting something into your muscle memory, the more natural it's going to sound when it comes out in the context of whatever music you're performing.

I hope this rocks for you, and gives you some ideas about adding material to your vocabulary and your practice routine. It was an instant hit for me, and I've spent a good few days working on these ideas since being in Canada with Mike, and trying to figure out if there's a natural-sounding place in my music for this new vocabulary.

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Andrew McKinney

Andrew is the Head Of Bass at Tech Music School in London and plays with the renowned James Taylor Quartet.

For the full Tuition Tip archive, including sound files and videos, visit Andrew's teacher profile at www.techmusicschool.co.uk. In every issue of this magazine, Andrew features a different class taught at the School, giving you a bite-size chunk of the lesson and an insight into his course.

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Tech MUSIC SCHOOL

ANDREW MCKINNEY

TUITION TIP: GUITAR ON BASS

Guitarist Interview: Femi Temowo

If you want to be in demand as a bass player, it really helps to find out exactly what other musicians are after. The chops that might impress your fellow low end enthusiasts won't necessarily get you many gigs, so I'm on a quest to find out exactly what other instrumentalists look for in a bass player. This month I sat down with guitarist Femi Temowo to get his perspective. Femi has performed with Amy Winehouse, Omar, The Roots, Soweto Kinch, Eska Mtungwazi and Brotherly, and in 2006 he released his debut album, *Quiet Storm*, to critical acclaim. He recently followed this up with his second release, *Orin Meta*, which blends Nigerian roots music with cutting-edge jazz. The album features an impressive line-up of top musicians, and showcases his composing, arranging and vocal talents. Femi has been a tutor at Tech Music School for several years now, and brings his experience and enthusiasm to many lessons, including the Live Performance Workshops. We hooked up to talk through all things bass.

What are the qualities that you value most in a bass player?

I think a lot of people assume that the bass player's job is purely to groove, which is obviously important, but what I really value is a sense of harmony. It's not just about root notes, thirds and fifths, I like to hear the notes that really bring out the colours of the chord. After a while you accept that any musician should be able to play in time and have a good sound, but an in-depth vocabulary with chords is the extra ingredient that I look for when booking a bass player.

When it comes to playing a fill or riff, you can tell a bassist's sense of harmony purely from the way they approach it. For instance, if you're playing a Motown tune, and you hear someone do something Jamerson-esque, it's instantly obvious whether or not they understand the harmony. Often people have just learnt a few Jamerson licks, and shoehorn them in, but there's more to it than that. A good bassist has to understand why Jamerson might play those phrases and how you can hear each chord in his bass-lines, even when there's no accompaniment. Tone is important too. Having a good sound involves adapting to whatever's necessary for the musical environment, rather than just sticking with one generic tone.

Who are your favourite bass players to play with?

There are three names that come to mind, in no particular order. There's a bass player called Michael Olatuja who I grew up with. He's my cousin, but I'm not mentioning him because he's family – Michael's a great musician, composer, and producer. I guess, because we grew up together musically, he thinks what I think. He's like my bass hand – I think of something and he's done it. Michael has a keen sense of harmony, coupled with a great sound and incredible feel, both on electric and upright. He plays on both of my records.

Robin Mullarkey taught me for a little while when I was studying at Leeds, back in the day. He's one of the most incredible musicians in the UK as far as I'm concerned – a great bass player who also plays a few other instruments. Again, he has a massively keen sense of harmony, and an amazing sense of groove. He has a really interesting approach to sound. He's very experimental with his bass tone and almost childlike in his approach to music, which means that you're always getting

surprises – it's fresh and I love playing with him for that reason. Another person is Rick James, who I haven't played with for a while. I mention him purely on the value of his ability to groove. Sometimes, it's required that a bass player can fill the role of a front instrument, and he has a phenomenal knack for that. All three of these guys are very easy-going.

Is a relaxed personality something you look for in a bassist?
When I think about booking a musician, especially bass players and drummers, I always take their personality into account. I find that if any of the rhythm section guys are off-kilter, it tends to affect things adversely.

Musicians have to respect the working environment and be prepared to get on with everyone. Stylistically and musically, it's important to get on board with the journey that the artist or composer wants to take the audience on.

It's also important that the rhythm section are open for anything – sometimes that means being open to the possibility that your vision of how the groove should sound might not work best in the situation. Some bass players I've worked with don't like to be told how to play the groove. The bottom line, though, is that if someone has come up with some music, you have to respect them, and allow them to direct you as to how they would like the music to go.

In your opinion, what are the most common things bass players get wrong?
There are definitely bass players who think that their sound needs to be the same for every song they play. I've encountered bass players who really want to have this fat, low-end, subby sound at all times. It's what they feel comfortable with, but it doesn't necessarily work for everything. Also, I don't like bass players who play exclusively with a plectrum. I think it's great for some things, but it's not always the right sound. Those are probably my two biggest pet hates.

Also, bass students often seem to think that chops come before everything else. They get hung up on being able to play slapping chops, or tapping chops, but I think that as you get older you learn that there's a lot more to music. If I had someone come to me and say they wanted to start learning to play the bass, the first thing I'd do is hand them some of the more commercial Motown tunes and tell them to go away and learn them for a year. Those tunes have everything in there. The Motown sound is undergoing a huge resurgence, so those tunes are influential enough to give you what's needed in a commercial music setting. You also get a lesson in time, feel, harmony, sound – everything. What you won't hear is someone trailblazing and playing chops all over the tunes – you can get that somewhere else. I think people go wrong thinking they need to able to play really fast, or have massive cabs, like this 4x10 and that 2x15 or whatever. Those things are not half as important as using your basic fundamental things like time, groove, feel and harmony.

Who are the bass players you would most like to play with and why?
James Jamerson for his pocket, his feel, and also the way he played harmony. He's influenced so many bass players over several decades. You can hear his sound in a lot of people, but I don't think anyone else has quite recaptured his true essence. His playing always sounds fresh, even if you have two songs in the same key with similar chords. To be like that you need to have a childlike approach to music, never really feeling that you know it all. I get that sense when I listen to him on records, and I would love to have experienced that first hand.

There's also Andrew Gouche, an LA-based gospel bass player. Sometimes when I listen to him I want to cry, but in a good way! He's a really busy player, but you don't feel it because he's so musical, with an incredible sense of harmony.

The next person I would love to play with is Richard Bona. Mostly because of the fact that he's phenomenal, but also because he's African like myself. I can totally empathise with his sense of groove. I'm totally at home with the way he plays, especially when he performs the more African side of his style. I've hung out with him a bit, and jammed with him when he was playing guitar, which was really cool, but it would be great share a stage and do it properly. I really hope I can make this happen in the future.

The one other person I would really love to play with would be Jimmy Garrison from the John Coltrane Quartet. I don't hear many upright bass players today with that level of energy or intensity, that downright intent that he possessed. It sounds to me that whenever he played, he really meant every single moment. That, I would love to experience.

What are your favourite bass lines, or bass performances?
Andrew Gouche is featured on a Ruben Studdard album called *I Need An Angel*. There's a particular track on that album that people in the gospel community like to talk about, called 'Goin' Up Yonder'. Andrew Gouche's bass playing on that is gold.

I'm really into Anthony Jackson's playing on Chaka Khan's album *What Cha' Gonna Do For Me*. He's one of my favourite bass players and his performance on that record is incredible. He requested that he could take away the rough mixes to really check the tunes out – I really respect that. It's amazing when someone is so keen to do an amazing job. At the same time, when he came back and recorded it, it still sounded fresh and spontaneous. He rolls with the drummer Steve Ferrone the whole way through that album.

I also love 'This Christmas' by Donny Hathaway. I'm pretty sure it's Willie Weeks on that track, but whoever it is, it's another great bass performance. I find it very memorable, I can pretty much sing the bass-line the whole way through, even though it's not a riffy-type thing. It's so musical and melodic.

What things do you think would be valuable for bass players to practise?
I said earlier how some bass players take the need for chops too seriously, but I still think it's important to have a good technique. As I always say to my students, if you want to be able to play at 100BPM comfortably, you have to be able to play at 120BPM. It's always important to exceed what your goal is, so that at your goal, you can be really excellent.

One thing I always say to guitarists, that also works for bass, is to practise arpeggios. It's a really handy way of improving your technique and command of the instrument, as opposed to playing a more linear scale, which is easier. In practising arpeggios you start to get a better sense of harmony and how chords sound, albeit one note at a time.

When you're practising this sort of thing it's about really paying attention to your picking hand, because that's where the work is. I think some bass players neglect that, although that is where the groove is. With the bass players that I like, there's a lot of stuff that's going on in the picking hand that's almost understated, things like ghost notes and phrasings. Doing arpeggio exercises can really help to develop that.

You can order Femi's new album Orin Meta *at www.femiguitar.com, and all digital download stores.*

I'll be interviewing various different musicians over the next few issues – let me what you think or if there's anything particular you would like to see!

andrew.mckinney@techmusicschool.co.uk,
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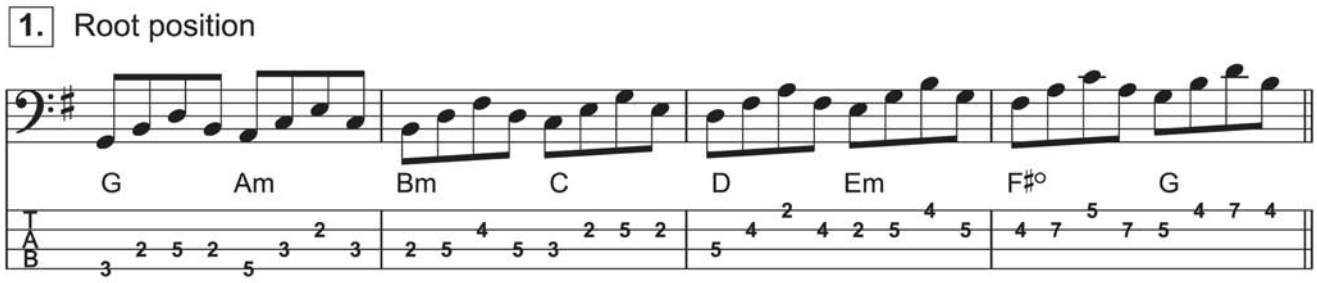
Exercises

Arpeggio attacks

One of the arpeggio exercises Femi suggested was to play all of the triads from a key (the harmonised scale), in root position, then first inversion, and then second inversion. There are various ways you can do this and many different positions. The tab here is designed to make you stay in position as much as possible for each exercise, but it's well worth exploring alternatives once you've got the principle of the exercise. I would also recommend sticking to one-finger-per-fret fingerings throughout.

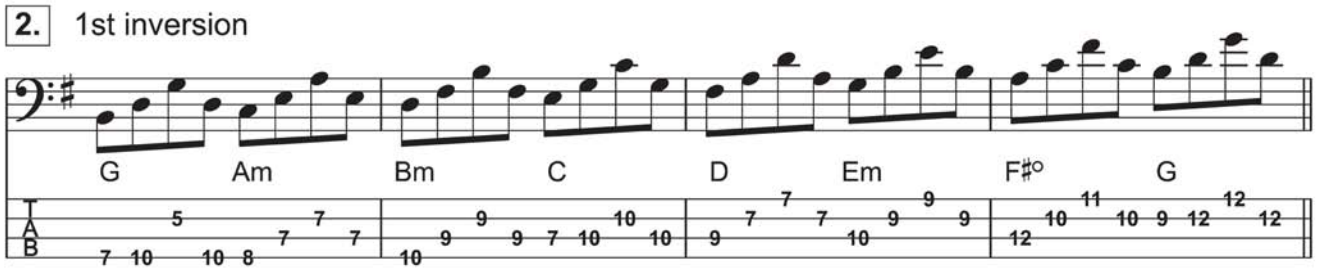
Exercise 1

This is a fairly standard arpeggio exercise, playing root, third and fifth for each of the triads in the key of G major.



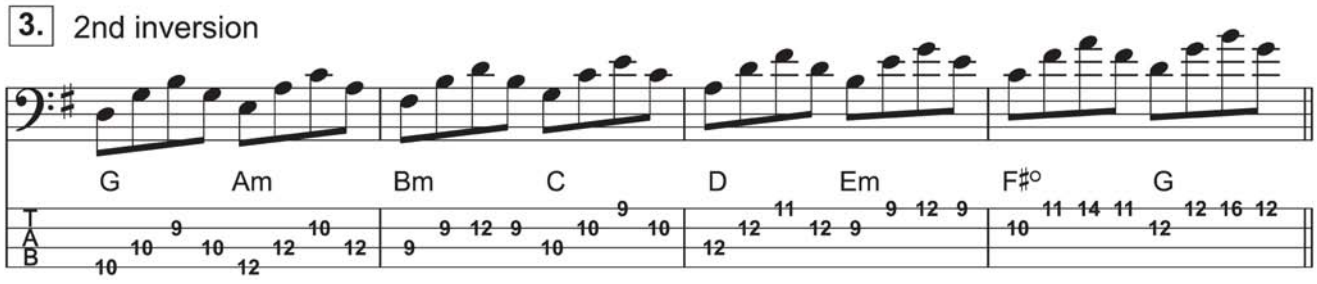
Exercise 2

A first inversion triad starts on the third and has the root on top. It can be tricky to keep track of which chord you're playing when you're not starting with the root, so keep an eye on the chord symbols.

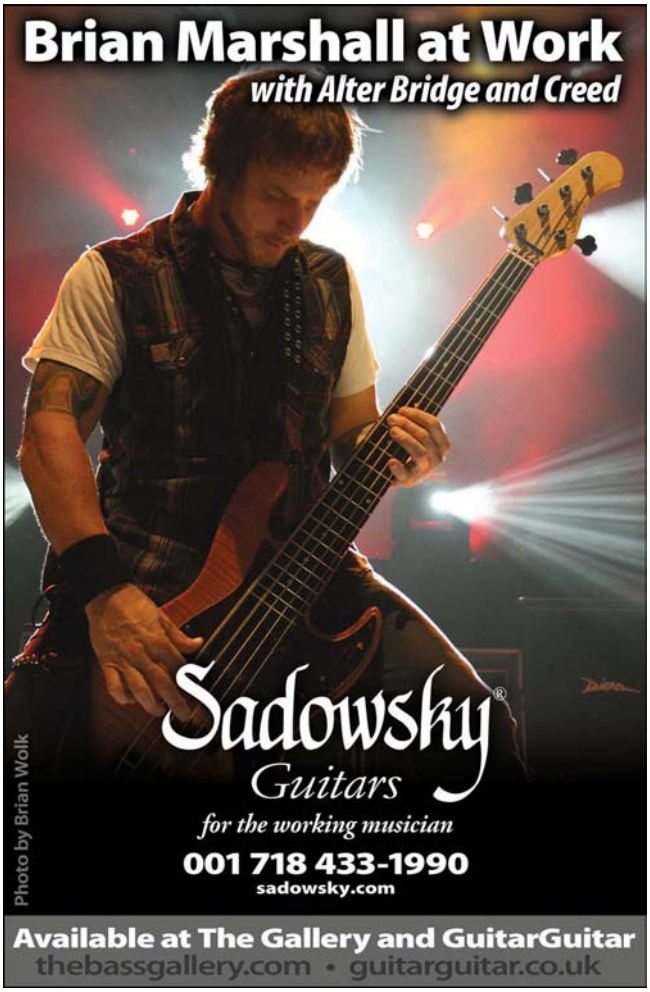


Exercise 3

A second inversion triad starts on the fifth, has the root in the middle and the third on top.



All of these exercises require a lot of string crossing, which presents challenges to both hands, but especially the one you pluck with. If you notice any imperfections or inconsistencies, isolate those notes and try to discover what is causing the problem.



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David Etheridge

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. His first gig on leaving was a tour with jazz legend Stephane Grappelli. Since then he's worked in a wide range of musical idioms, with musicians as diverse as Diz Disley, Nigel Kennedy, Martin Taylor, Rod Argent, Peter Skellern, Gary Brooker, Graeme Edge and Robin Lumley, as well as acts ranging from the Ballet Rambert to Frank Carson and Bob Monkhouse. He was the resident bassist at the Cambridge Folk Festival for several years in the 1970s. David currently teaches double and electric bass in the Midlands and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE

UPRIGHT CITIZEN

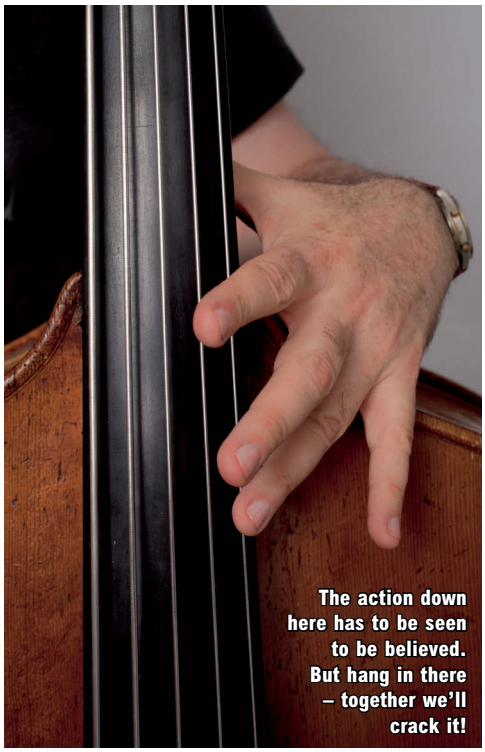
David is your guide in our new series covering all aspects of the double bass, from posture and technique to instruments and accessories.

Even for experienced electric players, the upright or acoustic bass can come as something of a shock. It's bigger in every way: longer, taller, heavier – the lot. Double basses can weigh in at 40lbs or more, and having to carry one around for any distance can be an onerous task. Full-sized double basses are large, unwieldy things that eventually get dings, bashes and far worse in the course of being loaded and unloaded from a car or train. My beloved bass still has the repair mark from a heavy-footed idiot on the tube many years ago.

When playing a double bass, you'll find that notes are further away than you ever thought possible. While a long-scale bass guitar may measure 36" from nut to bridge, 44" to 46" is standard on full-size orchestral basses. The action may be stratospheric enough to seem unplayable, unless you have giant hands and muscles. In fact, your left hand is going to have to do some serious stretching by comparison. Then there's the whole question of standing up to play, and having to support the neck with your left hand. Speed and dexterity go out of the window when you have a drowning man's death-grip on the neck to stop the instrument falling over. Do you really want to play the upright, or would you be better off trying fretless instead?

With up to 10" more scale length to play with and no frets, how are you going to find the correct notes?

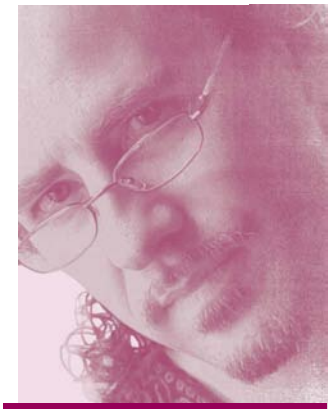
Vibrato offers its own particular challenges on a double bass.



The action down here has to be seen to be believed. But hang in there – together we'll crack it!

OK, relax. Things aren't anything like as bad as the scenarios I've described, but they are representative of some of the remarks you'll hear from aspiring players put off by the apparently unplayable nature of the instrument. The upright bass is characterful, and can take you to all sorts of delightful musical situations. The sound can be wonderful, with a satisfying woody thump that you'll rarely get from an electric – fretted or fretless. Weight and size might not be a major problem after all, as uprights can come in all sorts of sizes: full, 7/8, 3/4, 1/2, 1/4, even 1/10th size – the latter looks like an upright viola for tiny tots, and yes, I've taught them. Today's string technology means that you needn't fight insane actions on an instrument; modern pickups let the volts take the strain on a gig; and every part of playing the bass can be easy and effortless. You can sit down to play as well, freeing up your left hand to do the whizzing around that it was designed to do.

In fact the upright bass offers more than any other classical string instrument in the way of fun, gigs in all styles of music, and memorable moments. There's also the added incentive that double bass players are very much in demand due to their relative rarity. Add an upright to your arsenal of instruments and you may well win a top gig which asks for versatility as well as technique.



Franc O'Shea

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Described by *Bass Guitar Magazine* as 'the most musical of virtuoso bassists', Franc has also produced two solo albums. His most recent album, *Alkimia*, features Flamenco and Jazz legends Jorge Pardo and Rubem Dantas from Chick Corea's and Paco de Lucia's bands. Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
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FRANC O'SHEA

BASS BEYOND

Franc walks that walk and talks that talk, baby

In last month's column, I looked at creating walking basslines for sequences that have only one chord per bar as opposed to two. This month I will continue to extend these ideas to provide you with even more options for your lines.

From teaching hundreds of students over the past few years, I've come to realise that walking bass is one area that many bassists struggle with. Lots of players ask me how I manage to create so many variations within my own lines, yet still manage to outline the chord changes and be creative and musical at the same time. Well, it wasn't always like that! No-one is born walking in the physical or musical sense – we all have to learn step by step before it becomes natural.

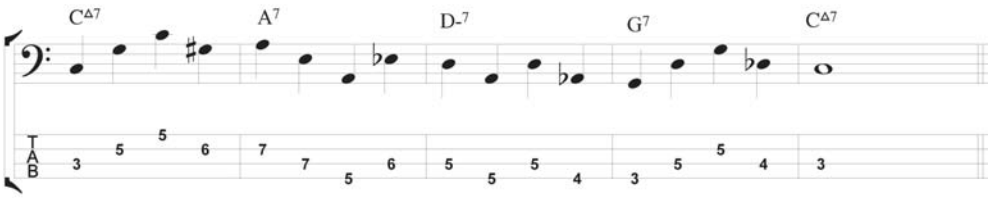
I remember first learning to walk when I was studying on a jazz and popular music course back in the late 80s: I would have to take home the chord sheet with me and create a walking line in advance for the following week's class. After a while I began to realise that I repeated certain patterns as many tunes have similar progressions, and so I began to develop my own repertoire of ideas, which I could throw together at will in different combinations. This, coupled with my knowledge of harmony and how it worked, meant that I could also intersperse my repertoire with ideas that are improvised, creating a language that worked in the walking context.

To further your walking studies I thoroughly recommend that you learn to play the chord sequences that you are attempting to walk over on your bass – not only with chords but also with arpeggios (double bassists are more likely to try only arpeggios). Playing a one-chord-per-bar sequence with arpeggios built from 7th chords would provide a walking line, but it would sound very clinical and lifeless. Even if you used inversions for each chord by starting on the next nearest chord tone of the next bar, it would soon sound stilted unless you mixed it with other ideas. What makes a great jazz walking line is a balance of ideas that create harmonic motion, and are not just a variation of the same idea. Mixing and matching ideas can help make your walking lines more colourful and can help you create lines that are not only functional, but interesting in themselves, enabling a balance of tension and release – so this month I'm providing further ideas for you to add to your arsenal.

I have previously looked at lines that are essentially triad arpeggios with a chromatic note added on beat four to link smoothly into the next chord. Since the third is either major or minor, you have to alter your arpeggio to accommodate the difference. Since most chords (but not all!) contain a perfect fifth, there is a very useful pattern that can help you when you've just been handed an unfamiliar chord chart to sight read on a gig. Once you become more proficient, you won't need to rely on such devices and can use them where necessary, musically.

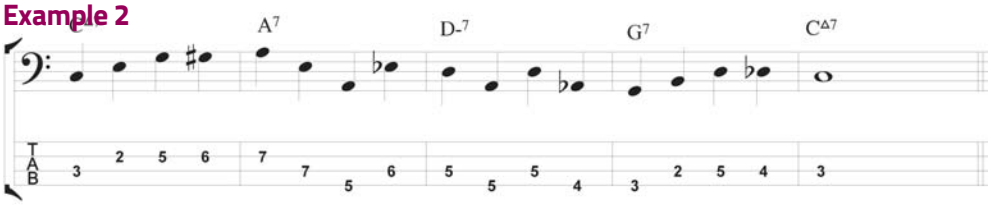
By using root/8th, 5th, root/8th and a chromatic leading note you have less to think about, as you don't have to take the thirds of the chords into consideration – thus making a chord chart easier to read. By shifting octaves you can create many variations such as root, 5th, root and chromatic leading note, or root, 5th, octave (8th), chromatic leading note, or octave, 5th, root, chromatic leading note, or octave, 5th, octave, chromatic leading note.

Example 1

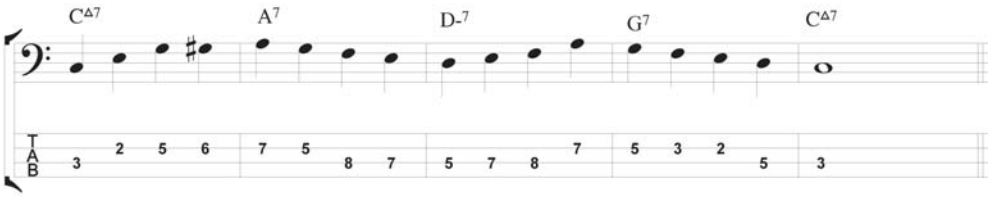


Example 1 demonstrates this concept, using variations with a I, VI, II, V, sequence in C major – Cmaj7, A7, Dm7, G7. I have avoided using the root, 5th, root, chromatic leading note, pattern as I find it can sound a bit clumpy. To make this idea more musical, we can then mix it with some of the arpeggio, chromatic leading note patterns from last month, as shown in *example 2*. Since all the chords in this sequence have a 7th in them, you could extend this idea further by using root, 5th and 7th, followed by a chromatic leading note.

Example 2

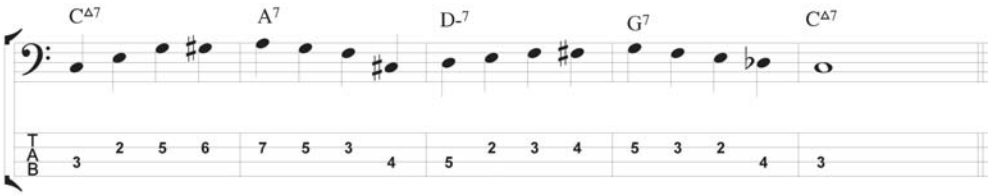


Example 3



Next we can start using scale tones as well as chord tones to create walking lines. In *example 3* you will notice that scale degrees are used in bars 2, 3 and 4. For the A7 chord in bar 2 I have alluded to the Phrygian dominant scale, which is why it has a b6th in the rundown. You may notice that the last bar could sound a bit more jazzy, which leads onto the next example which combines the scale and chord tones idea with a chromatic note on the 4th beat to lead smoothly into the next bar. In bars 2, 3 and 4 of *example 4*, we see that the chromatic leading notes on beat four of each bar create more tension.

Example 4

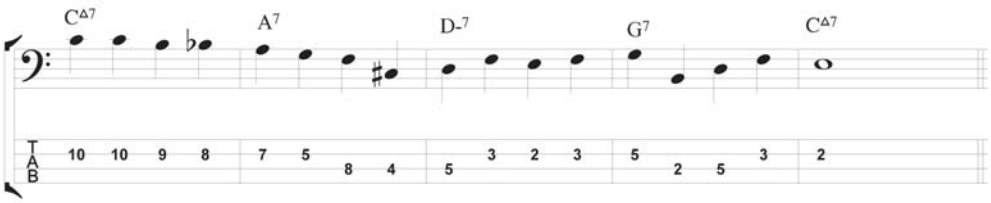


Extended arpeggios can also be used effectively, as in *example 5*. Here the first two bars use a triad arpeggio followed by a chromatic leading note, but, in bars 3 and 4 an eight beat, continually rising arpeggio occurs. This outlines the full voicing for a minor 13th chord (root, b3rd, 5th, b7th, 9th, 11th and 13th, followed by the root two octaves higher), but in terms of the 7th chord in bar 4 it would be its 6th then root, 3rd and 5th, outlining the changes in a unique and musical way. If you have a five string bass you could play this whole line an octave lower than shown in *example 5*.

Example 5

Another variation that works, and which is not often explored by bassists, is the playing of the same note more than once in succession. In the first bar of *example 6* we see two C notes played in succession before the line descends chromatically to reach the root of the A7 in the second bar. In bar 3 another variation occurs. Here we have a scale line, but rather than continually ascending, the line jumps from the root note to the minor 3rd and then descends to the major 2nd before doubling back on itself to the minor 3rd again, before finally reaching the root of the G7, chord creating a melodic twist. In the fourth bar of *example 5* we saw that a G7 arpeggio is employed by going from the octave of the root down to the 3rd, then to the 5th of the chord before finally landing on the b7th on beat 4. This line is made entirely out of an arpeggio and the b7 of chord V7 always leads nicely to the 3rd of chord I which is a semitone down from it. In my example here you can see that the F note moves down a semitone to land on the E of the C major 7th chord. This opens up another avenue – and I will further explore the use of inversions in walking bass lines in next month's column.

Example 6



KEVIN SANDERS

I WANT TO PLAY LIKE... BILLY SHEEHAN

The master of tap under the microscope

Kevin Sanders

Kev Sanders is a freelance electric and double bassist who has gigged and recorded with artists as diverse as singer Clare Teal and legendary saxophonist Pete King, to the Levellers and multi award-winning Korean classical pianist Ingrid Wu. As well as numerous BBC radio and television sessions, he's played over 4000 live gigs, appearing everywhere from Brussels to Broadway and as head of Bass Studies for AMS he developed and wrote both the full time Btec and Degree courses.

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'She's So Temperamental' Great groove playing from Billy, have a listen to the live version.

'Elephant Gun' With David Lee Roth band: check out those demi-semiquavers in the intro!

'Yankee Rose' Again with Diamond Dave's band: a great rock song, with great supportive bass playing.

We're used to hearing about fusion, prog-rock and jazz bass players with amazing technique, but out-and-out rock and roll bassists aren't so often revered for their monster chops. The exception that proves the rule is Billy Sheehan. He started his career in the 70s with the band Talas, before joining forces with Steve Vai and drummer Greg Bissonette in ex-Van Halen singer Dave Lee Roth's mega-band. As if this weren't enough, he then went on to form one of the most successful rock bands of the 90s, Mr. Big. As well as his career in bands, he's also released several solo albums and has always been involved in collaborative side projects.

For much of his career, Sheehan has played in three- or four-piece bands, where his ability to drive the band and maintain momentum while guitarists and keyboard players take solos has made him one of the hardest-working bass players in rock.

Billy Sheehan's Gear

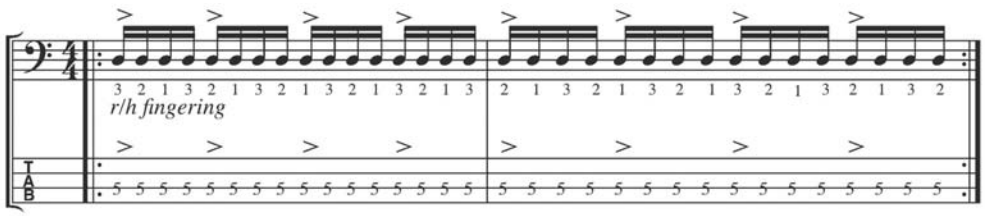
Throughout his Talas years, Billy Sheehan played just one bass, a battered and heavily modified Fender Precision, which he referred to as 'The Wife'. As well as reinforcing the neck join to withstand the abuse he gave it, he scalloped the higher frets out below the D and G strings, and fitted a Gibson EBO pickup in the neck position. He ran this to a separate output, allowing him to split his bass sound into two amp rigs. The normal Precision pickup signal was overdriven and distorted for soloing, while the neck pickup was kept bassy and super-clean. His second bass, a pink Yamaha BB3000, was also modified with scalloped frets and a big DiMarzio humbucker, again with separate outs. This was the bass he played throughout his time with the David Lee Roth band, but shortly after forming Mr. Big, he collaborated with Yamaha to produce the Attitude bass, one of the most successful signature basses ever manufactured, and one which brings together all his design ideas into one high-quality instrument. Although he was for many years an Ampeg endorsee and user, since 2010 Sheehan has used Hartke gear, with LH1000s amplifying his low end from the neck pickup while HA5500s take care of the top end. In his stage rack is a Pearce BC1 rackmount preamp/distortion unit, Ashley compressor and Decimator noise reduction unit. His cabs are Hartke AK, with paper cone drivers, and he's a long-time user of Rotosound strings.

Billy Sheehan's Style

We're going to look at two aspects of Sheehan's technique: his right-hand, three-finger plucking method and a couple of his favourite tapping licks.

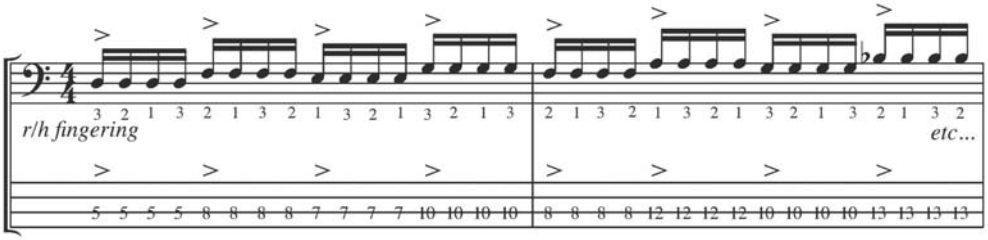
Exercise 1

Sheehan gets his amazing speed by using his first, second and third right-hand fingers when plucking. He also accents each beat within the bar, meaning the accented note will fall on each of his three fingers consecutively. This sounds complicated and does take a little practice, but persevere – you'll soon see a big increase in your right hand speed and accuracy. Start by playing this exercise slowly and gradually increase the tempo.



Exercise 2

Now play up the minor scale in thirds like this. Stay on the D string.



Now let's have a go at a couple of Sheehan's trademark tapping techniques.

Exercise 3

Combining tapping with left- and right-hand hammer-on/ pull-off. Begin by holding down the D on the G string with the first finger of the left hand, then tapping the F three frets above with the first finger of the right hand. As this note sounds, and while fretting it, pull off the right-hand finger upwards so that in effect you pluck the D already held down. Now with the third finger of the left hand, hammer on the E, then pull off sounding the D again. Continue for a few bars. This is in D minor, as the root note is D and the minor third is tapped with the right hand. By moving the tapped note up a semitone to F#, while maintaining the root on D, the phrase becomes major.

Exercise 4

This one's really impressive, using more fingers on both left and right hands.

Exercise 5

Now try this tapping exercise. I've tried on and off for years to get this as smooth and accurate as Sheehan – but I've never quite succeeded!

Dave Marks

Dave Marks is a busy freelance bassist living and working out of London. His playing and recording credits span a wide range of bands and artists, including Hurts, Nik Kershaw, Wishbone Ash, Julian Perretta, Larry Carlton, Albert Lee, Carl Palmer and many others.

At the minute his time is spread between pounding out eighth-note rock with the Rick Parfitt, Jnr band, touring with his 'RhythmMatters' masterclasses and depping internationally with Hurts and for Thriller Live on the West End.

Aside from his full playing, teaching and masterclass schedule, Dave maintains a heavy web presence, between his own site, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter pages.

For backing tracks to use with this lesson, visit ***www.davebasslessons.com***

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DAVE MARKS: MELODIC BASS PLAYING

MODES

Welcome to part three of my series on modes. This month: The Lydian mode

Last month, we delved into the Phrygian mode, one of the more exotic-sounding minor modes. This month, we're moving on to the fourth mode of the major scale, the Lydian mode. *Figure 1* shows the notes of F Lydian. You should notice that it contains all of the same notes as the C Ionian mode (major scale) that we looked at in our first lesson. The difference is that now, our point of resolution is on the note F.

Figure 1

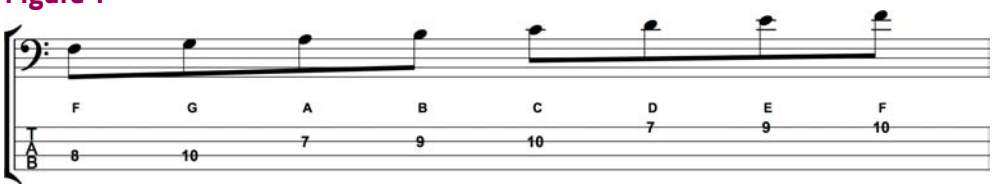


Figure 2 shows a fretboard diagram that should help you picture the shape we're using. I'd advise using a one-finger-per-fret approach, with fingers 2 and 4 on the A string, then 1, 3 and 4 on the D string and 1, 3 and 4 on the G string.

Figure 2

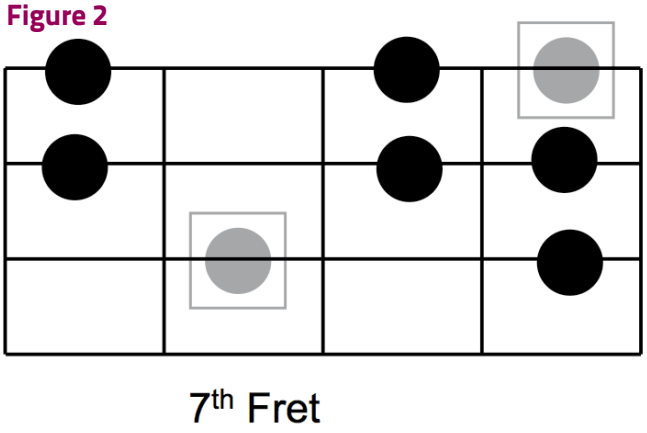
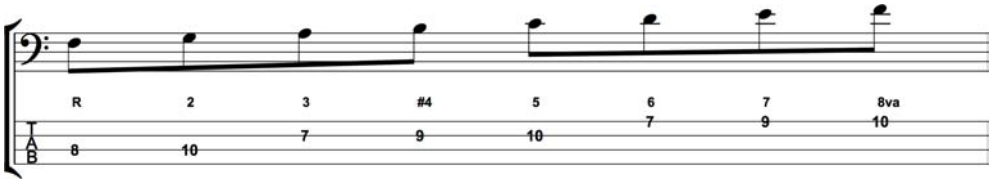


Figure 3 shows the scale degrees that are present when we play F Lydian. If you isolate the I, II and V, you'll find F, A and C – the root, 3rd and 5th of an F major chord. Add to that the 7th (E Natural) and we have an F major 7 chord to vamp over.

Figure 3



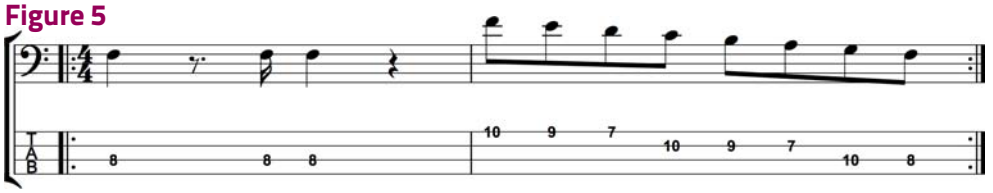
As you can see, Lydian is very similar to the major scale. Both work over a major 7 chord and, if you avoid the #4, it's possible to improvise without hearing any difference. Therefore, in order to create the Lydian sound, we must feature the #4.

Students have asked me 'Why is it a #4 and not a b5?' Every mode of the major scale contains seven notes and we cannot have two occurrences of a note, nor can we have a gap. If it was a b5, the scale would read C, D, E, Gb, G, A, B. This would mean that we have no F note and two occurrences of G (G and Gb).

Let's start practising so that we can become more familiar with the sound and shape of the F Lydian scale. *Figure 4* uses a very simple idea – play one bar of the groove and then one bar of the scale. We'll start by ascending the scale and when you've got that down, try starting from the top of the scale and descending (*figure 5*).

Figure 4

Figure 5

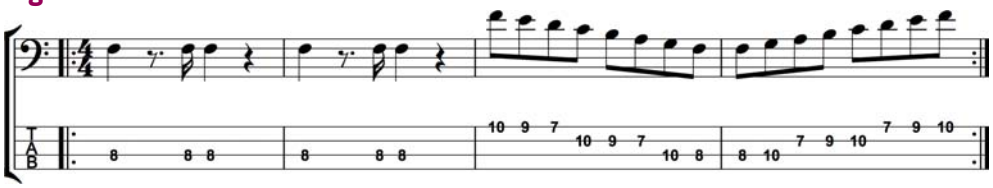


Let's expand that basic idea into a two-bar groove, with two bars of the scale. In *figure 6*, this idea allows us to ascend and descend across two bars. Make sure to repeat that top note F, so that the scale fits perfectly into two bars.

Figure 6

In *figure 7*, we start and end at the top of the scale – all the same notes, just the opposite movement.

Figure 7



In *figure 8*, the last two bars are left empty so that you can begin improvising with the Lydian mode.

Figure 8

To begin with:

- Play the ascending scale, but vary the rhythms to create different phrases.
- Repeat the same thing with a descending scale.
- Try creating a one-bar idea and doing an exact repetition.
- Try creating a one-bar idea and doing a repetition that ends differently.

These are just four simple ideas, but they should get you started with playing more freely around the Lydian mode. I've created a set of mp3s for this lesson, which you can download for free from www.davebasslessons.com. In it, I play through each example, discuss some improvising ideas and also provide two backing tracks for you to practise over.

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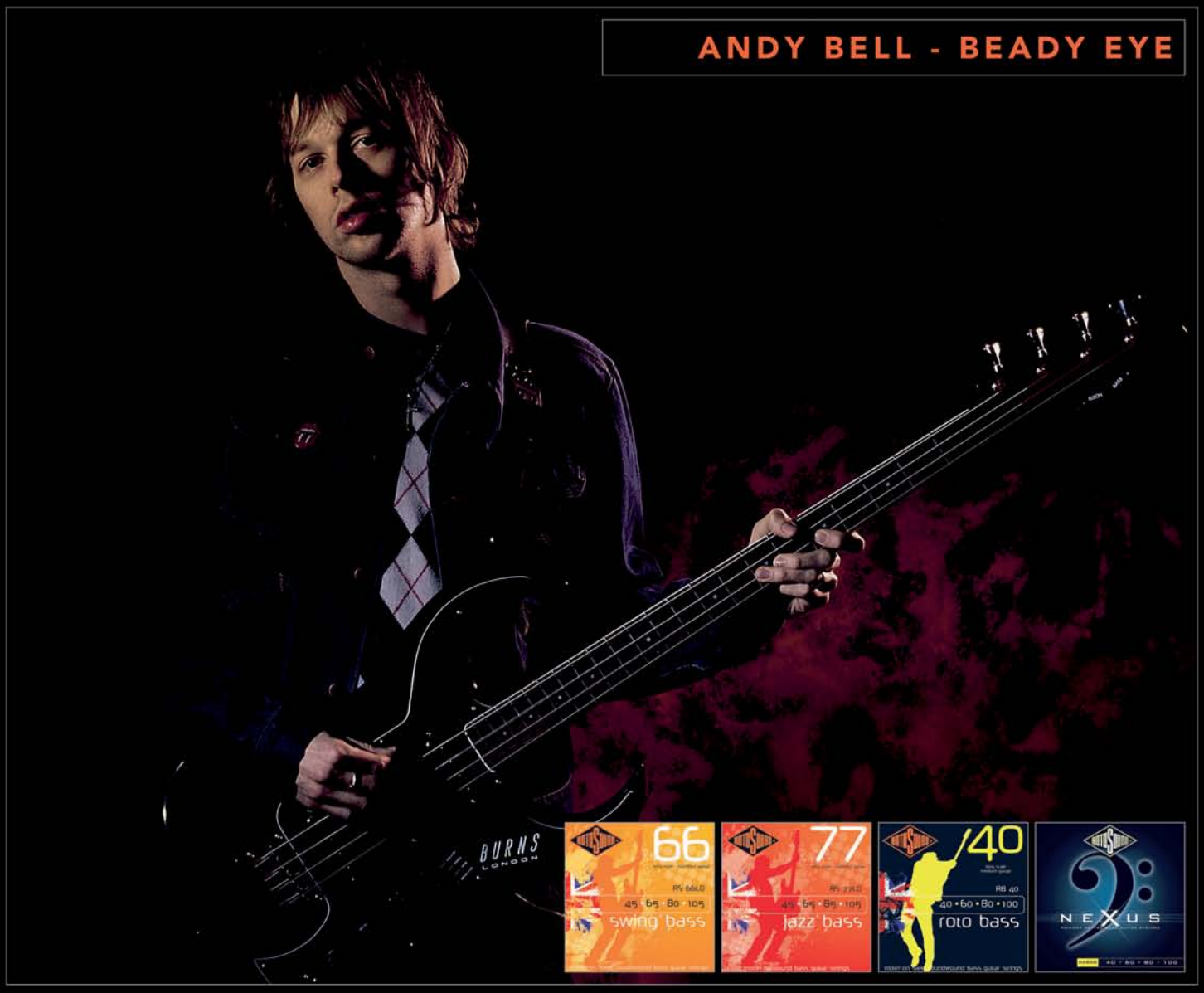

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